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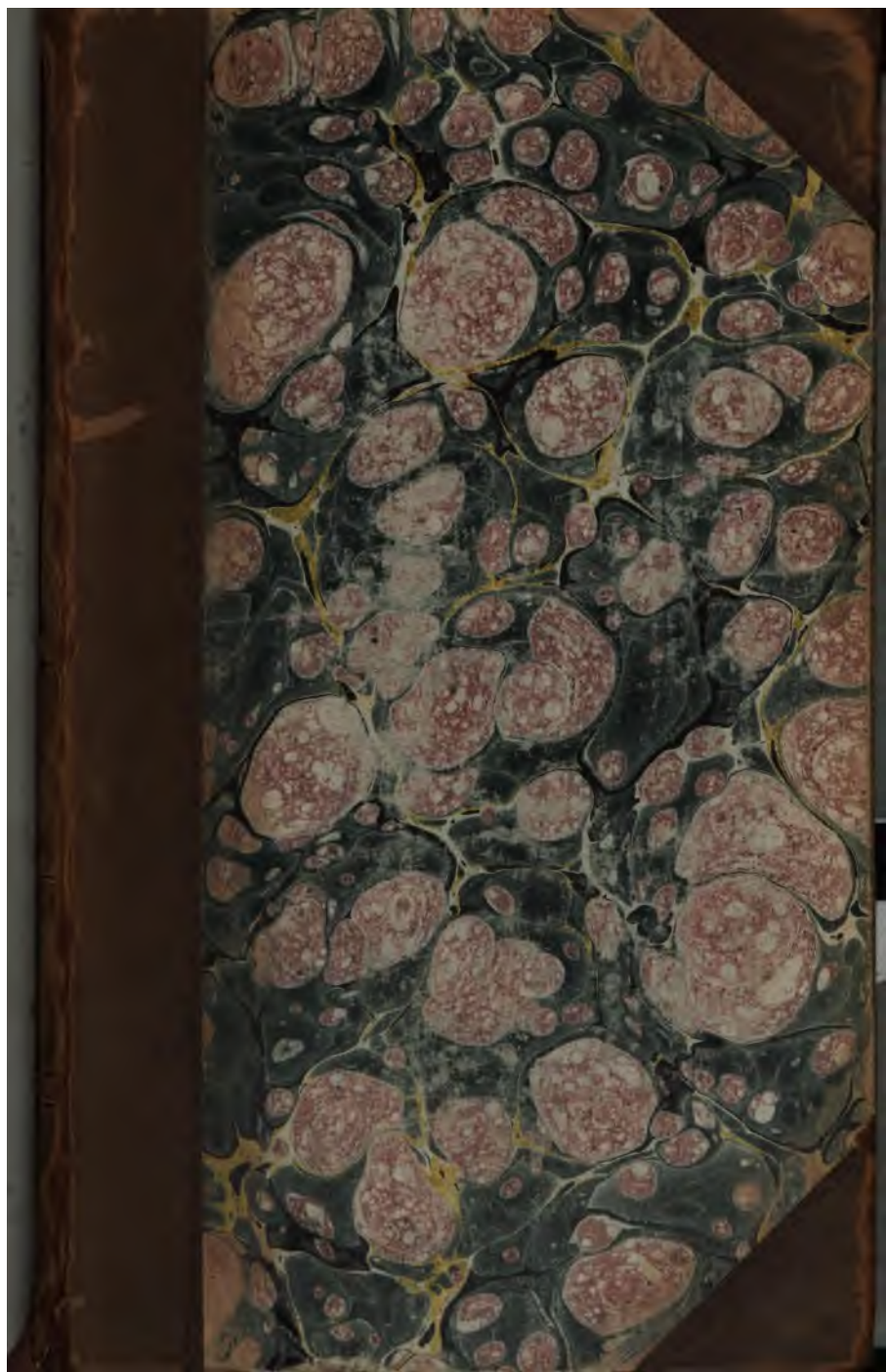
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FAMILY LÉCTURES
ON
THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

VOL. I.



J. H. A.
FAMILY LECTURES,

IN THREE PARTS,

ON THE

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

OF THE

Christian Religion :

FOR THE

USE OF FAMILIES, & FOR GENERAL INSTRUCTION.

WITH

AN ADDRESS TO SERIOUS INQUIRERS

ON THE

MEANS OF OBTAINING THAT KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTH

WHICH LEADS TO SALVATION.

BY JOHN PRIDHAM, M.A.

FARINGDON, BERKS.

SECOND EDITION.

VOL. I.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 TIM. III. 16, 17.

Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. REV. XXII. 14.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY RICHARD WATTS,

Crown Court, Temple Bar.

PUBLISHED AND SOLD BY SEELEY AND SON, FLEET STREET;

AND SOLD BY ALL OTHER BOOKSELLERS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

1826.

247.



PREFACE.



THE Writer's object, in this Publication, is, to edify the Christian Believer, to awaken the careless and profane, and to furnish plain directions to those who are desirous to know what they "must do to inherit everlasting life."

The Work is especially designed for the use of Families and for general instruction; and may, therefore, be put into the hands of persons of every description:

Paragraphs have been occasionally inserted from Authors of acknowledged piety and talent: and where a forcible argument or illustration occurred, the Writer has ventured to enrich his own Work with it.

The Lectures were not written from texts; but texts have since been appended to them, explanatory of the subjects on which they treat.

To prevent the Book from assuming too great a bulk, it has been found necessary to make some of the Lectures very short. If each

PREFACE.

subject had been copiously discussed, the Work would have been considerably too large for general use.

The Author most fervently prays that the blessing of Almighty God may attend the perusal of these Discourses, so as to render them instrumental to the salvation of all who may read them. But, should the instructions which they contain guide only a single wanderer from the fold of happiness, into the paths of righteousness and peace, or afford the least consolation to the household of faith, the Writer will derive the highest satisfaction from the bare contemplation of such a result of his labours.

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FAMILY LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

ON THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

Romans i. 19, 20. *Because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them ; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead ; so that they are without excuse.*

“ **T**HAT there is a God, all nature cries aloud.” The existence of a Deity, who is the proper object of worship, lies at the very foundation of all religion, which presupposes that there is some wise and holy Being, to whom we are responsible for our actions.

Though God has not shewn himself to his rational creatures in a visible manner, for the sight would be too dazzling for mortals in an embodied state to contemplate, yet he has furnished them with the means of clearly ascertaining his existence and perfections : and if we will but employ our senses, perception, and reason, for the purposes for which they were given to us, they will afford conclusive evidence of the important point which we are now endeavouring to establish. “ God has not left himself without witness, in that he continually doeth good, giving us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.” “ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead ; so that

^a Acts xiv, 17.

they," who pertinaciously deny his Being, "are without excuse" for their impious unbelief^b.

It does not accord with the plan of this work to enter at large into the several arguments which might be advanced to demonstrate the existence of a God : nor is it necessary, since it has been already done, in the most satisfactory manner, by learned men, to whose writings I refer the reader^c. Yet I cannot persuade myself to omit a brief statement of those reasons which are generally urged in its defence.

1. It may be observed, then, that there evidently must have been from all eternity some intelligent first cause of all things ; otherwise no rational account can be given of the existence of those things which we now behold. They could not have occasioned their own existence : indeed, there was a time when they had no being at all. And it is obvious, that what has no existence cannot possess a power to act or produce any other thing similar or dissimilar to itself : unless it can be supposed possible for a thing to be, and not to be, at the same time ; which is a palpable absurdity. It follows therefore, from these premises, that there is an eternal efficient active cause, from whence every natural object, which the world presents to our view, proceeds ; and that this cause is self-existent, and totally independent of every thing created by it. Now this original all-sufficient cause is what we denominate God, who gives life and energy to all things ; "for in Him we live and move, and have our being^d." In Him all conceivable perfections centre ; and whatever moral excellence is found in any finite creature, was first communicated to it by the ineffable source of all good.

This capital doctrine is compendiously exhibited

^b Romans i. 20. ^c See Grotius and Paley. ^d Acts xvii. 28.

in the First Article of the Church : "There is but one living and true God, everlasting ; without body, parts, or passions ; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness ; the Maker and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible."

2. The general concurrence of mankind in this fundamental article of our most holy faith, is a strong reason to induce us to believe it ; for it is not likely that such a sentiment should so generally prevail throughout the known regions of the earth, if it were not forced upon men by the strongest evidence. Even savage nations, unenlightened by the Christian revelation, have some indistinct conceptions of a Superior Being, whose favour they wish to propitiate, and whose wrath they dread as the sorest calamity. And there seems to be no doubt, but that the multifarious rites of Paganism, debased as they are by superstition and cruelty, owe their origin chiefly to that consciousness which Heathens possess of a God, to whom they look for health, safety, and happiness, and whom, by those means, they intentionally, though ignorantly, worship.

3. The formation of the world naturally leads the mind to contemplate a Creator, by whom it was made. The world, it is evident, had a beginning ; and, therefore, is neither eternal, as some of the ancient Philosophers supposed : nor did it create itself ; for mere matter, being destitute of activity and power, thought, and intelligence, cannot act, but as it is put in motion by some powerful agent, to whose pleasure it must be subservient. For the same reason, it is equally impossible that the world should have originated from a casual concourse of atoms : and hence it will undeniably follow, that it must have had a Creator of boundless wisdom and power.

If we attentively survey the structure of the habitable globe, the beauty of its parts, and the relation which they bear to each other—if we consider the order, design, and harmony, which pervade the whole—we shall be sensibly struck with the folly of Atheism, which ascribes the performance of so vast and complex and beautiful a work to the agency of chance. As soon might we expect that unshapen pieces of materials thrown at random in the air would form themselves into a well-built edifice, as to conceive that what is called chance could have had any thing to do in the production of the world, the several portions of which are so nicely arranged as to be accommodated to the convenience of every animal which inhabits it. But, in fact, we everywhere throughout the universe observe such clear marks of design, as abundantly declare that it must have had an all-intelligent contriver. The globular form of the earth, which is perhaps most conducive to the welfare of the different animals which live on its surface—the position of the sun in the centre of the heavenly bodies, whence its rays diverge so advantageously as to fructify the earth without annoying its inhabitants—the regularity discernible in the motions of other celestial bodies, and the benefits which their revolutions produce, strike all, who duly reflect on these things, as convincing proofs that the Author of Nature is supremely wise. Peculiar marks of contrivance are conspicuous in the admirable structure of the human frame; which is a piece of mechanism so curiously compacted, as to display, in the most sensible manner, the great skill of its framer. The most inconsiderable parts of our bodies have their appropriate uses, and no one of them is without its purpose.

4. *That instinct possessed by irrational animals,*

whereby some of them are enabled to build nests and provide for their young; and by which others prepare dens and subterraneous retreats, for shelter against the inclemency of the weather, for avoiding what is noxious, and laying up, as in a treasure-house, those things that are adapted to promote their well-being; argues a wise Providence, which has gifted the brute-creation with this especial property, for the preservation of their lives.

5. Conscience, however reluctantly, bears her testimony also in favour of the existence of a God. Indeed, this faculty is the vicegerent of heaven: and though its power to perform its office is much impaired, by the depravity of our nature, and through long habits of iniquity which blunt and harden it, yet it has, even now, a still small voice to exert in behalf of God who gave it, which, if listened to with patience, would produce the happiest results. Attentive to the warnings of that internal monitor, many would be afraid to plunge themselves heedlessly into the commission of crimes which it loudly condemns. As it is, conscience effects the most valuable purposes: it restrains the violence of some, and intimidates others from pursuing schemes of villainy: and, notwithstanding all the attempts made by wicked men to stifle its suggestions, which too often succeed, there are seasons when, faithful to its trust, it makes them a terror to themselves, by "setting their secret sins in the light of their countenances."

Let us come home to our own experience. When Atheistical thoughts have arisen in our breasts, when we have been ready, with the fool, to say in our hearts "There is no God," have we not felt a something within us, which has suddenly repelled the daring assertion? or, when we have promised

ourselves impunity in the commission of some evil action, have we not been instantly checked by a voice in our bosom, saying, "How can we do this great wickedness, and sin against God^{sd}." Now we should regard these admonitions of conscience, as so many vouchers to assure us of the being of a God, "whose smile is heaven, whose frown is hell," and who thus silently, though clearly, condemns our iniquity.

6. Miracles and prophecy jointly declare there must be a God; who can alter the laws of nature when he pleases, without deranging it; and foresee future events, the accomplishment of which cannot be defeated by the instrumentality of secondary causes. How could so many predictions, as the Scriptures record, have been punctually fulfilled several ages after they were uttered, except by an omniscient God; to whom, past, present, and future are alike known; and with whom "a thousand years are but as one day," or the shortest space of time, in comparison with his own eternal duration? It is impossible for those who deny the inspiration of the Divine word fairly to withstand the evidence which miracles and the completion of prophecy afford of the existence of a God, "who ruleth all things after the counsel of his own will, both among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth."

7. The orderly manner in which, for the most part, the affairs of the world are managed, evinces a Divine power and interposition that superintends and regulates them. A general providence exerting itself for the good of man, is evidently at work in all mundane transactions. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understand-

* Gen. xxxix. 9.

ing, nor yet favour to men of skill." "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord^c." To this kind interference, thousands are indebted for numerous advantages, who would otherwise perish for lack of proper attention.

The care taken of the young, the indigent, the helpless, and the destitute—the restraints put upon the disorderly passions of many, which if once set at liberty, would deluge the world with crimes—and the comparative order and tranquillity which exist in society, where so many opposite interests are excited by local circumstances—these, and other things which might be specified, shew the manifold wisdom of God in the government of the world.

We must not, however, confine the exercise of providence to some great occasions only; since the Divine government graciously descends to the minutest particulars of the present life. Hence Christians are taught to believe that every event is at God's wise disposal, and "that He hath determined the times before appointed, and fixed the bounds of their habitation^e:" yea, that even a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without the knowledge of their heavenly Father^b, who directs every thing with an especial reference to His own glory, and the benefit of the Church of Christ^d. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out^f."

This doctrine is not at all weakened by the apparent inequalities discoverable in the temporal conditions of men, or by the mixture of good and evil, or the frequent triumphs of the wicked over the righteous, in the present life. In a state of probation

^c Ecclesiastes ix. 11. ^d Prov. xvi. 33. ^e Acts xvii. 26.

^b Matt. x. 29. ^f Rom. viii. 28. ^g Rom. xi. 33.

like this, it is no reflection either upon the goodness or justice of God, to permit wickedness sometimes to prosper, and righteousness to be despised and trodden under foot. The permission of such evils does not prove that the righteous Lord "sits on the circle of heaven" as an idle spectator of passing events, unconcerned about our actions, whether they are vicious or virtuous. No; it only argues that here men are allowed to use their free agency; for the abuse of which they must hereafter give a solemn account to God. Difficulties like these must be left to the day of retribution, when that which is "crooked will be made straight," and a perfect separation will take place between the precious and the vile;—when the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal¹."

¹ Matt. xxv. 46.

LECTURE II.

ON THE SACRED TRINITY.—THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.—
DIVINITY AND PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

§ 1. THE SACRED TRINITY.

2 Corinth. xiii. 14. *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.*

REASON, by the utmost extent of her researches, could never have found out the mystery which the Bible reveals, that in the Divine nature there exist three distinct Persons, subsisting in one undivided essence, each of whom is acknowledged by himself to be "God and Lord^a." This is indeed a doctrine which we can neither fully comprehend nor explain; yet we should thankfully receive the infor-

^a Athanasian Creed.

mation which God, who best knows the mode of His own existence, has been pleased to give us respecting it. Without entering into a metaphysical disquisition on a subject so awfully profound, I shall select a few of those passages of Holy Writ (to which many others might be added) which have led sincere Christians to believe the doctrine, on the testimony of the Divine Records.

1. The unity of the Godhead is constantly asserted by the Sacred Penmen, who assure us there is but one God, infinitely wise, powerful, and good, the Author and Sustainer of all things. It seems to be one of the leading designs of the Old Testament to establish this truth, in opposition to the multitude of false Deities, in whom the Heathen professed to believe. To prevent the Israelites from being infected with the reigning idolatry, great pains were taken to give them correct notions of the God with whom they had entered into covenant. "Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord^a." The first commandment interdicts the worship of Idols, and declares the honour due to the Supreme Majesty of heaven: "Thou shalt have no other Gods but me^b." The Lord asserts the unity of his Divine essence in the clearest manner: "There is no other God but one. Besides me there is none else; I know no other^c." "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and besides me there is no Saviour^d."

The New Testament speaks just in the same strain: "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent^e." The Apostles uniformly inculcate the belief

^a Deut. vi. 4.

^b Exodus. xx. 3.

^c Isai. xlv. 6—8.

^d Isai. xliii. 10, 11.

^e John xvii. 3.

of One God amongst the first articles of the Christian faith^f: they reprobate the Polytheism of the Gentile world, as a most aggravating affront to the Divine Being; and draw an argument for the mutual forbearance, love, and union of believers with one another, from the Scripture doctrine, "There is one God, one Lord, one faith, one baptism^g."

2. Whilst the Scriptures thus affirm the unity of the Divine nature, they positively teach us, that in this one true God there are Three distinct personal subsistences, of the same power and excellence^h, though distinguished as to order of time and operation:—God the Father, who is the fountain of the Deity; God the Son, mysteriously begotten of the Father before all worlds, even from all eternity; and God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from both. It will be in vain to attempt to demonstrate this point by unassisted reason; for it must be admitted that the existence of Three Persons in One God could never have been thought of, had it not been so expressly revealed in the Bible. There are several intimations of the doctrine in the Old Testament. The use of the Hebrew substantive *Elohim*, which is in the plural number, with a singular verb, was most probably designed to prepare us for the reception of this mystery. It is not easy to discover what end could be answered by the adoption of this anomalous form of expression, unless we suppose it was intended to suggest a plurality of Divine persons in the Godhead.

Again; the frequent union of *Elohim* with plural verbs, adjectives, and pronouns, leads to the same conclusionⁱ.

^f 1 Cor. viii. 6.

^g Eph. iv. 5, 6.

^h 1 John v. 7, 8.

ⁱ Gen. i. 1—6. iii. 22. xi. 26, 27. Deut. iv. 7. See Jones on *the Trinity*.

There are other notices of this truth scattered throughout the writings of Moses and the Prophets. The mention of the Lord raining fire from the Lord upon Sodom^t; the form which the High-priest was taught to adopt in blessing the Children of Israel¹; the description of the Wisdom of God, as a Person with God from eternity¹¹; the mention of the Spirit of God as assisting in the work of creation^m, and as inspiring the Prophets in the delivery of their predictionsⁿ, afford ground for believing that they pointed at the doctrine of a Triune God, as the proper object of religious adoration. In the New Testament, such clear proofs are given on the subject, as ought to satisfy the scruples of the most incredulous persons. The commission given by Jesus Christ to his Apostles is decisive on the point: "Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost^o." Baptism is an act of dependence and devotion. To be baptized, therefore, in the name of the Trinity, intimates a thorough reliance on those Three Divine Persons, as joint donors of spiritual mercies, and a desire to consecrate ourselves to their service. Now this act of dedication to the Son and Holy Ghost, as well as to the Father, undeniably evinces their divinity and equality in a solemn act of worship, which can only belong to the Divine nature. None but God can ensure the grant of heavenly blessings; and, therefore, as the Three Persons are joined together without any distinction, in whose name men are to be "baptized for the remission of sins^{oo}," they must all Three be the True God; otherwise the name of a mere man, or of

^t Gen. xix. 24. ¹ Numb. vi. 22—27. ¹¹ Prov. viii. 22—32.

^m Gen i. 2. ⁿ 2 Peter i. 20, 21. ^o Matt. xxviii. 19.

^{oo} Acts ii. 38.

a creature, or of some quality or operation of Deity, would be thus associated with that of God, which is absurd and blasphemous to suppose.

The benediction of St. Paul in behalf of the Corinthians is a remarkable confirmation of this truth. At one time, he invokes a blessing on them, in the name of Two of the sacred Persons: "Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and Christ Jesus our Lord^p." At another, he unites them all: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all^q." Now, if Christ and the Holy Spirit were merely created Beings, it would indeed be a great offence against God to class him with creatures so much inferior to himself: but, since they are named as distinct Persons, and prayed to as the grand fountains whence all spiritual good flows, we must conclude they are all equal and Divine; otherwise it would be highly improper to place Christ before the Father, in an act of adoration which is due only to the blessed God.

There are passages in which the Three Divine Persons are mentioned altogether; such as that in which Christ says, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever^r." The salutation of St. John to the Churches in Asia refers to the sacred Three: "Grace and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ^s." They who wish to see a more full discussion of the subject, may consult those authors who have enlarged upon it.

^p 2 Timothy i. 2.

^q 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

^r John xiv. 16.

^s Rev. i. 4, 5.

§ 2. THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

John i. 1. *In the beginning was the Word ; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

With respect to the Godhead of the Father, there is no question raised about it ; as all, except avowed Atheists, acknowledge His existence and divinity. It is the Deity of the Son and Holy Ghost which infidels assault with so much malignant invective ; imagining, that, if they can but shake the faith of mankind in this capital doctrine of our holy religion, they shall soon be able to subvert Christianity itself, which is built thereon, as its grand foundation and support. So long, however, as the Bible is revered amongst us, as a book containing the oracles of God, every attempt to invalidate the Divinity of Christ, or the Spirit of Jehovah, must prove utterly unsuccessful ; because Sacred Writ insists upon the point with such frequency, clearness, and decision, that we are either forced to receive it as a positive truth, or to believe that it is revealed as a falsehood, in order to ensnare and deceive us. Every thing we know of God confutes a thought so impious and wicked ; and therefore we ought to listen to His declarations in this respect, as undoubtedly true.

We shall endeavour to prove, by arguments drawn from Scripture, that Jesus Christ is God, not in a subordinate, but in the most absolute sense which can be affixed to the term. Indeed, the proof of his Divinity does not rest upon a few texts of a doubtful signification, but upon the whole tenor of Scripture, a great part of which is altogether unintelligible upon any other supposition. Let it however be understood, that it is not denied that Christ "is a perfect man, with a reasonable soul and human flesh

subsisting." The necessity for the union of the manhood with the Divine nature will be noticed in another place^a. Our present object is to shew, that Jesus Christ, who tabernacled on earth in human form, is truly and properly God.

1. He is repeatedly styled, in Holy Writ, both God and Lord. "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace^b." "In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God^c." "And of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came; who is over all, God blessed for ever^d." "And without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness; God was manifest in the flesh^e." "And we are in Him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life^f."

The term Jehovah, which is the incommunicable name of God, and never used but in reference to himself, is several times applied to Christ: consequently he must be God. The Almighty Father declared to Moses his self-existent deity, by saying, "I am that I am^g." Christ used a similar form of expression concerning himself to the Jews: "Before Abraham was, I am^h."

Again; Jeremiah prophesying of the reign of Messiah, says, "This is His name whereby he shall be called, the Lord (or Jehovah) our Righteousnessⁱ." Isaiah was favoured with a vision of Jehovah in his temple: "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts^k." St. John, alluding to this circumstance, as-

^a See Lecture on the Mediation and Intercession of Christ.

^b Isai. ix. 6.

^c John i. 1.

^d Rom. ix. 5.

^e 1 Tim. iii. 16.

^f 1 John v. 20.

^g Exod. iii. 14.

^h John viii. 58.

ⁱ Jer. xxiii. 6.

^k Isaiah vi. 5.

serts that the Prophet then “saw the glory of Christ, and spake of him^l.” Jéhovah says by Isaiah, “I am the first and the last; and besides me there is no God^m.” This honour our Saviour claims to himself: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the lastⁿ.” “I have sworn by myself, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory^o.” The first passage refers to Christ’s coming to judgment; and the second relates to the method by which believers are justified through his merits.

2. God himself, in the most striking manner, attests the equality of his Son with himself: “Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered^p.” St. Matthew applies the prophecy to Christ, to whom the other part of the quotation unquestionably belongs^q.

3. The Lord Jesus, during his ministry, made several declarations concerning himself, which amount to unanswerable proofs of his Divinity. “I and my Father are one^r.” “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father. I am in the Father, and the Father in me^s.” “All things that the Father hath, are mine^t.” “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine ownself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was^u.”

4. He claims the same worship which is due to

^l John xii. 41.

^m Isaiah xlv. 6.

ⁿ Rev. i. 8, 11.

^o Isaiah xlv. 23—25.

^p Zech. xiii. 7.

^q Matt. xxvi. 21.

^r John x. 30.

^s ib. xiv. 9, 11.

^t ib. xvi. 15.

^u ib. xvii. 5.

God ; “ that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” “ He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father, which hath sent him.” Angels were commanded to worship him^w. Had our Saviour been merely human, he would not thus have put himself on an equality with God, nor have enjoined men to pay him that sort of Divine homage, which is idolatry when offered to any created Being, however greatly distinguished.

5. Moreover, the signal display of Divine attributes which he made when on earth, for the benefit of mankind, affords a demonstration of his Divinity. His assertions, no less than his actions, evinced his omnipotence. “ All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth^{xx}.” “ I am the resurrection, and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die^x.” The creation of the world, which is sometimes ascribed to him^y, and the various miracles which he performed by a word or touch, proved that he was possessed of Almighty power.

He affirmed his perfect knowledge of the hearts of men, and the circumstances of their lives. “ Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man ; for he himself knew what was in man^z.” He told the Woman of Samaria all things that ever she did^a. He knew from the beginning who it was that should betray him ; and he foretold his sufferings, and the events connected therewith^b. He also avowed his omnipresence : “ Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am

^v John v. 23. ^w Ps xcvi. 7. Luke ii, 9 — 14. Heb. i. 6.

^{xx} Matt. xxviii. 18. ^x John xi. 25, 26.

^y John i. 3. Col. i. 16. Heb. i. 10.

^z John ii. 24, 25.

^a John iv. 29.

^b Luke ix. 22.

I in the midst of them^c." "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world^d." The fulfilment of these promises is necessary for the edification and existence of the Church, which would inevitably fall to the ground without His support.

The following words maintain the ubiquity of our Divine Saviour. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven^e."

How could Christ be in heaven, whilst speaking on earth, except by virtue of his Deity, by which he "filleth all things," and can be everywhere present at the same moment?

6. What then is the inference justly deducible from these texts? It is precisely this, that whosoever exercises such attributes, must of course be God; because they are not possessed by the highest created Being. But as Christ manifested that those Divine powers resided in himself, and that he was able to exert them whenever he saw fit, he must therefore of necessity be really God, possessing every perfection answerable thereto.

§ 3. ON THE DIVINITY AND PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Acts v. 3, 4. *Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.*

That the third Person in the Trinity is a Divine Being, equal to the Father and the Son, may be proved with the same certainty as the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such names are given and actions attributed to him, as demonstrate that He is a Person who partakes of every excellence which peculiarly belongs to the Deity, and is therefore to

^c Matt. xviii. 20.

^d ib. xxviii. 20.

^e John iii. 13.

be regarded as God, and entitled to the same reverence as his spiritual-compeers.

1. He is uniformly addressed as a person actively employed in advancing the interests of piety and holiness in the world.

Christ, when he promised his disconsolate Disciples to send them one who should supply the want of his kind instructions, calls him "the Spirit of Truth^a." Here, and in several other parts of St. John's Gospel, the personal pronoun is used in reference to the Holy Ghost, which shews that not a quality, name, shadow, operation, or emanation of God, is intended, but a real Person.

The Spirit is said to have spoken "by the mouth of David^b." He gave instructions "to Saul and Barnabas" respecting the work of the ministry^c.

He appoints the Pastors and Guardians of the Church. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood^d." He is said to will, and to give commands.

He is declared, by his divine *afflatus* on their minds, to have influenced the Inspired Penmen in the delivery of spiritual truths. "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost^e."

He is represented as being sensibly affected by the misconduct of those who neglect or deride his gracious monitions. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption^f." "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation^g."

^a John xiv. 17.

^b Acts i. 16.

^c Ib. xiii. 2.

^d Ib. xx. 28.

^e 2 Peter i. 21.

^f Ephes. iv. 30.

^g Mark iii. 29.

Such language concerning the Spirit is calculated to mislead us, if He be not in reality a Person truly Divine.

The important offices which he performs manifest his personality, beyond contradiction.

He is styled a Teacher. "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you^b."

He is named a Guide. "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth^c."

He is called a Comforter. "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever^d."

He is denominated, in union with Christ, a Sanctifier. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God^e."

He searcheth the hearts and "trieth the reins"^f of the children of men.

He intercedes for us. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered^g."

These actions denote the personal agency of the Holy Spirit, if any words can convey such an idea to our minds; and, in concurrence with the other proofs which remain to be adduced, afford satisfactory evidence of His equality with the Father and the Son; for it is not credible that any, except a Divine Being, can properly discharge those spiritual offices which have been specified.

^b John xiv. 26. ^c ib. xvi. 13. ^d ib. xiv. 16. ^e 1 Cor. vi. 11.

^f Romans viii. 26.

2. The proper Deity of the sacred Spirit is strongly maintained in Scripture. Ananias had been guilty of falsehood in a matter of great importance; and Peter said unto him, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God^a."

Christian believers, who walk in the paths of holiness, are called "the temples of God, whose Spirit dwelleth in them^b;" yea, they are said to be "an habitation of God through the Spirit^c."

The titles and names which he bears are expressive of his Divinity. "He is called "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of the Lord," "the Spirit of Christ," "the Eternal Spirit," "the Spirit of holiness" and "truth," "the Spirit of power," "wisdom," and "knowledge."

It would be blasphemous to suppose that the Divine Person, to whom such appellations belong, is not God, in the highest sense of the word.

Divine attributes are ascribed to him in the Scriptures.

His omniscience is asserted. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God^d."

His omnipotence was displayed in creating the world in union with the Father and the Son. We are told by Moses, that, in the formation of all things, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters^{qq}."

The work of regeneration which he effects on the hearts of real Christians bespeaks the exercise of a sovereign power, that is capable of accomplishing what none but God can perform^r.

He manifests His omnipresence, by dwelling in the

^a Acts v. 3, 4. ^b 1 Cor. iii. 16. ^c Eph. ii. 22. ^d 1 Cor. ii. 11.

^{qq} Gen. i. 2. ^r John iii. 5—9.

hearts of the Saints, and being everywhere ready to console, edify, and bless the Church. These perfections demonstrate the Holy Spirit to be very God.

Thus we see, that in the Trinity, each of the Persons is Divine; "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet they are not three Gods, but one God." And thus "the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal*."

3. The full admission of the doctrine we have been discussing is of primary importance to us, as fallen creatures. The whole scheme of our redemption depends upon it; for each of the Persons who compose the Trinity acts a prominent part in the business of our salvation, which cannot be dispensed with.

We are indebted to the wisdom and compassion of the Father, for devising the plan to save our ruined race from endless perdition; to the matchless love of the Son, for assuming our nature, in order that he might offer himself a sacrifice to God for our sins; and to the Holy Spirit for applying the saving benefits of the Gospel covenant to our souls.

4. To disbelieve, therefore, the existence of either of the Sacred Persons, or to disallow their Divinity, is to affront the Lord of Heaven who has made known this truth, and to deprive ourselves of all those heavenly blessings which they respectively communicate to the faithful¹. We ought, without the least hesitation, to receive the doctrine of the Trinity upon the authority of God, who is incapable of declaring a falsehood. He cannot be under any temptation to deceive us, who abhors the most distant approach to iniquity. To say the doctrine is mysterious and incomprehensible, is not a sufficient excuse for rejecting it; since

* See the Creed of St. Athanasius. ¹ 2 Corinth. xiii. 14.

the ways of God in nature, and the ordinary dispensations of his Providence, equally perplex our feeble understandings. Well did Zophar exclaim, on a view of the Divine incomprehensibility, "Canst thou, by searching, find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." We must expect that the dispensations of his Grace will be clogged with equal, if not greater difficulties than those of his Providence. And if we are constantly forced to admit that, in the material world, effects are produced by causes which lie hid from us, or which are too complex for our limited capacity to unravel, surely it will be no disparagement to our finite intellect implicitly to credit what God asserts, and requires us to believe, respecting the manner of his own spiritual existence, though we are unable, for the present, distinctly to comprehend it. We know but little of the mode of our own existence, or in what way the soul is so intimately connected with the body, that the presence of the former should be necessary to give life and action to the latter; and yet we perceive that a separation from its vivifying companion occasions its immediate death. Shall we, then, presume to dispute the peculiar mode of God's existence, who are so ignorant of the nature of our own?

Besides, it can never be proved that the doctrine in question, although above reason, is contrary to it, or that it involves an absurdity. Our inability to conceive how Three Persons can exist in One God is not a sufficient reason for disbelieving it; and when the voice of Inspiration loudly affirms the fact,

"Job xi. 7—10.

let us believe that "there are Three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and that these Three are One*."

* 1 John v. 7.

LECTURE III.

CHARACTER AND PERFECTIONS OF GOD, AS DELINEATED IN SCRIPTURE, AND EXEMPLIFIED IN HIS DEALINGS WITH MEN.

Deuteronomy xxxii. 4. *He is the Rock; His work is perfect, for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is He.*

NEXT to the belief of a God, it is incumbent on every one, who desires to worship him aright, and to secure his favour, to think, speak, and act towards him in full accordance with the revelation which he has given of himself in the Scriptures; lest, framing to himself an imaginary God, he should reverence a mere creature, that has no existence, but in the excursions of the wildest fancy.

The behaviour of men towards God too clearly proves that his character is not rightly understood, and duly estimated. Some exalt one of his attributes at the expense of another: extolling the mercy of God beyond all bounds, they overlook his justice, and thus flatter themselves with a false and fatal peace, though they go on frowardly in their wickedness. Others presumptuously say, The Lord will neither do good nor evil; because he does not "speedily execute sentence" against their ungodly deeds*. These mistakes, so pernicious in their consequences, spring from wilful ignorance of the spotless holiness of the Divine Character, which will be found at last to accord most fully with the representations of his Word.

The experience of all ages shews, that although

* Ecclesiastes viii. 11.

reason, in its proper exercise, enables us to discern some feeble glimmerings of the excellence and glory of God, yet that if we would form just conceptions of his Divine Majesty, we must approach the Bible with a teachable spirit, and bow to its infallible instructions on the subject.

This submission of our understanding to the oracles of God is rendered expedient by the darkness and corruption of our natural state, which disqualifies us for forming suitable notions of a Spiritual Being, whose glory is exalted far "above the heavens," and whose "truth and mercy reach unto the clouds^b."

If we leave such a guide, we shall fall, like the unenlightened Heathen, into the grossest errors; and be in danger, in the extravagance of our imaginations, "of changing the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things^c."

I shall endeavour, therefore, as compendiously as possible, to describe the character of God, as He hath drawn it; that learning from his own mouth the excellence of the Divine Nature, we may give Him the honour due unto his name, and, in adoration, exclaim, "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God: He is the Rock; His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is He^d."

1. The Sacred Volume attributes self-existence, and eternal duration, to God. Jehovah possesses "life in Himself^e," and a felicity which admits of no augmentation or decrease. He exists in and of Himself, independent of any extrinsic cause whatever. "I am that I am: this is my name for ever; and this is my memorial unto all generations^f." All other Beings had

^b Psalm cviii. 4—6.

^c Rom. i. 23.

^d Deut. xxxii. 3, 4.

^e John v. 26.

^f Exod. iii. 14, 15.

once no existence at all. God formed them by his resistless power, and is able to reduce them in a moment to their primitive nothingness.

Jehovah, on the contrary, has been from everlasting, what he now is, in essence, felicity, and perfection; and will continue the same for ever^g. Hence he styles himself “the High and Lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity^h.”

Reflections on the ceaseless existence of God are capable of answering two valuable purposes: they afford strong consolation to his people, by shewing that he ever liveth, and will be the source of their happiness through countless ages in heaven; and they are calculated to fill the souls of transgressors with terror, when they consider that the everlasting God can inflict on them a punishment commensurate with their guilt.

2. God is immutable: his decrees, and purposes, his love, and hatred, continue invariably the same towards their respective objects. “He is in one mind, and who can turn Him?” The whole creation is subject to continual change and fluctuation: even man, the noblest work of God, is liable to various mutations from good to evil: but in the Lord Jehovah “is no variableness, neither shadow of turning^k.” The name of a “Rock,” by which he is frequently called in Scripture, denotes his unchangeable nature, as well as his faithfulness to his covenant engagements. As a rock remains unmoved amidst the perpetual agitation of the surrounding ocean, so God continues absolutely “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever^l,” whilst every created object is constantly tossed about by unforeseen circumstances.

^g Psalm cii. 25—28.

^h Isai. lvii. 15.

ⁱ Job xxiii. 13.

^k James i. 17.

^l Heb. xiii. 8.

This excellency of the Divine Being renders him worthy of the unshaken confidence of his Saints, towards whom his love is from "everlasting^m;" and it suggests to all men the duty of manifesting an invincible hatred to unrighteousness, and of walking, with undeviating constancy, in the path which leads to immortal glory.

3. The Scriptures affirm, that "God is a Spiritⁿ:" by this expression we are taught, that he possesses an infinite understanding, an absolute perfection of will, consciousness, and power. These properties, peculiar to the Divine Spirit, exalt him infinitely above inert matter, which is totally different from him: and we must remember, that God surpasses, in real excellence, all created spirits, infinitely more than they do the material creation. We are to conceive of him, not only as a living, intelligent, active Being, essentially distinct from all the bodies which our eyes behold, but as possessing perfections which belong to no spirit he has formed, and infinitely distant from every imperfection adhering to them, such as, their existence within certain limits, their ignorance in numberless instances, and their defects in excellency; whilst God, the Father of the Spirits of all flesh, is infinite in knowledge, wisdom, power, and every perfection.

4. God is an omnipresent Being: he pervades, by his all-enlivening influence, the whole universe, which is the work of his hands. How animated, and how inimitably sublime, is the language of Scripture on this subject! "Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord^o." "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither

^m Jer. xxxi. 3.

ⁿ John iv. 24.

^o Jer. xxiii. 24.

shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there: if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right-hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me: yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day; the darkness and the night are both alike to thee^p.”

By this representation we are taught to “worship God in spirit and in truth^q,” and never to flatter ourselves with a hope of concealing our sins from Him whose eye roams throughout creation, “beholding the good and the evil.”

5. God is Omnipotent, and Almighty. That he is possessed “of all power in heaven and earth,” he demonstrated, by creating the world, and all things, out of nothing. He called things into existence, and they suddenly rose up to proclaim their Maker’s glory. “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He spake, and it was done: he commanded, and it stood fast^r.” The power of God is displayed in preserving the world which he has made: the uniform course and operations of nature bespeak the wise and resistless agency of the Lord. “He watereth the earth, and blesseth the increase of it.” He causes the seasons to revolve: he retains the great luminaries of the heavens in their orbits, commanding “the sun to shine by day, and the moon and the stars to give their light by night.” “He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will^s,” so that nothing happens which he does

^p Psalm cxxxix. 7—12.

^q John iv. 23, 24.

^r Psalm xxxiii. 6—9.

^s Eph. i. 11.

not foresee. The same power can destroy the whole fabric of nature in a single moment, so as to leave no traces of its former existence. "He removeth the mountains, and they know it not: he overturneth them in his anger: he commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and sealeth up the stars. He shaketh the Earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble: the pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof: the mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; and the earth is burnt at his presence¹."

6. "The omniscience of God is celebrated in the Divine Records. His knowledge and wisdom are equal to his immense power: hence, all things which transpire in the world above, or in the earth beneath, are perfectly known to him. The whole system of the universe, the laws by which it is governed, with every event from first to last, are known to him."

"The countless host of sinless angels, and the world of apostate ones; the long progeny of mankind, with all the designs, desires, and thoughts which have been in the mind of each individual, and all the words which have ever fled from their lips; fall under his notice. With infallible comprehension, he knows all the active principles of the spirits he has formed; how they will be moved by the presence of every object which can come before them; how they will act upon every temptation that can try them, and in every circumstance in which they can be placed."

The following passages of Holy Writ direct us to form such conceptions of the blessed God. "Great is our Lord, and great is his power; his understanding is infinite:" the ways of man are before the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings: the eyes of the Lord are in every place: he looketh to the ends of

¹ Job ix. 5—8. xxvi. 11. Nah. i. 5. ² Acts xv. 18. ³ Ps. cxlvii. 5.

the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven: the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: He knoweth the things that come into our minds, every one of them: "all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do^x."

The wisdom evinced by God, in forming and executing his plans, argues that his knowledge is unlimited in the government of the universe: he so manages all its parts, that, whatever changes any of them undergo, their usefulness and connection with each other are uniformly preserved. He makes even the most adverse circumstances contribute to the promotion of his grand designs. The wickedness of man, the cruelty and artifices of Satan and his emissaries, are made to subserve (though unintentionally on their parts) his sovereign purposes. He overrules the fall of our First Parents, to make room for the most illustrious exercise of mercy to their descendants^y.

Yet, in general, he chooses to accomplish his will by means, in human judgment, the most unlikely to succeed; in order to shew that "the excellency of the power" to perform it, is entirely of himself^z.

How wonderful is God! The more we consider His natural perfections, the higher must our admiration rise: for who can meditate on the self-existence, eternity, immensity, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence of God, without, at the same time, feeling they are subjects too deep for any finite intellect to fathom. The little we know of him should lead us to exclaim, with Saint Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His

^x Heb. iv. 13. ^y Gen. iii. 15. ^z 2 Cor. iv. 7.

judgments, and His ways past finding out! For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen²²."

ON THE MORAL PERFECTIONS OF GOD.

Hitherto we have spoken of the natural attributes and excellencies of the Deity. We now discourse about his moral perfections, which we can better understand; though a view of both claims for their glorious Possessor all possible reverence, confidence, love, and sincere obedience.

1. The enlarged goodness of the Lord demands our grateful acknowledgments: he delights in communicating blessings to his creatures: his kindness in providence extends to every part of his vast dominions. "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works: he openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing: the eyes of all wait upon him; and he giveth them their meat in due season^a."

Each and every human being is an object that attracts the parental regards of our Heavenly Father: all receive signal marks of his benevolence; and though he bestows on some a more abundant portion of temporal things than on others, yet he imparts to all that measure of good and happiness which are suited to their respective conditions.

The almost indiscriminate manner in which God exercises his benignity towards a wicked world clearly evinces that kindness exists in him, unmixed with those selfish motives which too often debase the charitable acts of frail creatures. He is not like us, who are partial in the distribution of our favours

²² Rom. xi. 33—36. ^a Psalm cxlv. 9—16.

towards those who please and benefit us in return : on the contrary, so irresistibly strong is his propensity to goodness, that he blesses his most determined adversaries : “ He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust^b.”

But how conspicuous was the loving-kindness of God, when he freely gave his Son to die for us, in order that we might regain his forfeited favour, and with it a legal right to endless life. “ In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins^c.”

2. The mercy of God shines forth in the most glorious manner to the view of the world. It is legibly written in the Bible, with the finger of God, that even the vilest of the sons of men, if they will but renounce their sins, may derive comfort from the perusal of it. When he passed before Moses his faithful servant, he proclaimed his character, “ The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin^d.” Hence we learn, that mercy in God is excited by the misery of man, as the cause of its exercise. Mercy pardons the wretched sinner who deserves to die, gratuitously, for its own sake. Now if God were not thus “ rich in mercy ” to the penitent, his holiness and goodness would only increase the guilt and despair of a conscious transgressor. But, to allay the fears of the contrite, and inspire them with a cheering hope of forgiveness, he

^b Mat. v. 45. ^c 1 John iv. 9, 10. ^d Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

has made a most gracious proclamation, by which he invites the most rebellious to return to a state of dutiful obedience to him. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Lest the unholy should be afraid to approach his footstool, or be ready to despair of obtaining mercy, on account of the heinous character of their offences, God, though the offended party, deigns to solicit them to enter into a conference with him, in order that the matter in debate may be amicably settled: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Lest even these affectionate overtures should not remove every doubt of God's willingness to pardon the most criminal offenders, when they sincerely apply to him, because he could swear by no greater, he swears by himself: "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" "wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

The mercy of God will be found, in fact, to correspond with the declarations of it in his word.

When Adam, who was previously happy in the enjoyment of God's favour, listened to the wicked suggestions of the Devil, and provoked his Maker to destroy him; instead of hurling vengeance on the head of the first and most flagrant offender, who had so foully insulted him, and so completely ruined both himself and his posterity, the goodness of God shone with a lustre which nothing could exceed; for

* Isa. lv. 7. 'ib. i. 18. ' Ezek. xxxiii. 11. 'ib. xviii. 32.

he was pleased to revive the desponding souls of Adam and Eve, with a promise of salvation through Christ, who should be crucified as a blasphemer, but, in his expiring moments on the cross, should vanquish Satan, and restore felicity to his chosen people: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel^b." Astonishing mercy! How wonderfully does "God commend his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for usⁱ." In every age since the tragical event to which we have alluded, God has given the most indubitable proofs of his clemency to the broken-hearted sinner. He has selected some as objects of his mercy, who, before their conversion, were the vilest of the sons of men, in order that the chief of sinners might be encouraged to renounce their iniquities and live.

Manasseh, who impiously set God at defiance; and wantonly shed the blood of his subjects^k; Saul of Tarsus, who was a sanguinary persecutor, and made dreadful havoc of the infant church^l; some of those who crucified the Lord of Glory, and put him to an open shame; yea, even the thief upon the cross, in his dying moments^m; all these, and many others, when they humbled themselves at the footstool of his mercy, found pardon.

God is still seated on a throne of grace, ready to dispense, in the kindest manner, forgiveness to the greatest delinquents, when they seek him with all their hearts.

3. The holiness, righteousness, and justice of God are written in the Scriptures as with a sun-beam, and

ⁱ Gen. iii. 15.

^k Rom. v. 8.

^l 2 Kings xxi. 2—16.

^m Acts ix. 1—7.

ⁿ Luke xxiii. 40—43.

are strikingly confirmed by his conduct towards men and angels. These perfections are of eminent service, to prevent the abuse of his mercy, and to teach offenders not to suppose that God has no just abhorrence of sin. For were Jehovah to exercise compassion and love to sinners without a due regard to his justice, his law would be dishonoured, and its glory eclipsed ; his purity would not shine forth (as it now does, by redemption through the satisfaction of Christ) in its full splendour ; and sinners would be emboldened to indulge their vicious practices, under the idea that they could not be regarded as criminal by God, since he did not mark them with his just displeasure.

To manifest, then, the unspotted righteousness of his Divine nature, and to shew that he displays mercy in full consistency with the demands of justice, he loudly proclaims himself "a just God and Saviour;" who, though he forgives the penitent, will by no means clear the guilty, the impenitent, and unbelieving^o, lest his purity should be sullied, or he should appear in the slightest degree to encourage sin, which he abominates.

The whole tenor of Divine truth accords with this view of the subject. God styles himself, repeatedly, "The Holy One of Israel;" to publish to the world that righteousness is an attribute essential to his character. So strict is the regard he pays to it, that, in confirmation of the promises of the everlasting covenant, he saith, "Once have I sworn by my Holiness, that I will not lie unto David^p."

If God, then, be thus unalterably righteous, he can never be indifferent to the behaviour of men, as it respects himself. Without the testimony of Scrip-

^a Isa. xlv. 21. ^o Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. ^p Psalm lxxxix. 35.

ture, we may be sure that he constantly notices the actions and deportment of each individual, and records their good or bad deeds "in the book of remembrance;" and that, at the last day, he will reward or punish with the utmost impartiality.

His word corroborates this statement. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings^a."

It is true, the prosperity which sometimes attends the wicked in this life, and the afflictions of the righteous, often obscure our views of the apparent equity of God's providential dispensations. But no disparity, however great, in men's temporal condition, should lead us to the unwarrantable conclusion, that God regards good and evil as objects alike indifferent to him; since his word solemnly avers, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth^r."

But even now, as well as hereafter, God makes a marked difference "between those who serve him, and those who serve him not^s."

God avows that he bears the strongest affection for his people, whom he more tenderly regards than a woman does her beloved offspring^t; that he delights in them, and will preserve them from every danger, and finally bring them to the possession of unceasing bliss. The following passages are a few, out of many, that attest this truth. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry^u." "The Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk up-

^a Jer. xvii. 10.

^r Psalm lviii. 11.

^s Mal. iii. 18.

^t Isa. xlix. 15, 16. ^u Psalm xxxiv. 15.

rightly". "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord".

These representations of his attachment to his Saints we find exemplified in his dealings with the Church. He took Enoch to heaven, in the sight of a corrupt generation*. He saved Noah and his family, in the ark, from the deluge**. He granted peculiar tokens of his regard to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, on earth; and, at their death, received their departing spirits into abodes of glory†. He sent Christ, the Angel of the Covenant, to deliver his chosen people Israel from the iron bondage of Egypt; and to conduct them, through the Wilderness, to the Promised Land. He rescued Daniel from the lions' den‡; and preserved his companions from the destructive fury of a burning fiery furnace§.

And although he does not now, as in ancient times, remarkably interpose for the deliverance of the Faithful, still God "knoweth them that are his;" and will make "all things work together for good to them that love him, and are called according to his purpose." Even now he accomplishes his promise to the Church¶; so that, notwithstanding the malice of Satan, Christianity still prospers, and extends its benign triumphs throughout the world.

On the contrary, God has told us that his holiness and justice compel him to punish, with insupportable torments, all the enemies of his government, and despisers of his truth, who die in their sins.

* Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 12. † Isa. liv. 17. ‡ Gen. v. 24.

** Gen. vii. 23. † Heb. xi. 13—17. ‡ Dan. vi. 16—24.

† Dan. iii. 27, 28. ‡ Mat. xxviii. 20.

Hear how he thunders out his wrath from heaven against those who oppose his authority! and you cannot doubt whether God is concerned to vindicate his injured honour. "God is angry with the wicked every day^b." "Upon the ungodly he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest: this shall be their portion to drink^c." "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God^d."

Jehovah has repeatedly demonstrated the glorious holiness of his nature before all, that they may be deterred from offending him.

He punished Satan and his rebellious associates, by expelling them from Paradise, and plunging them into the abyss of everlasting woe. "He spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment^e."

The execution of the sentence pronounced on Adam, and the dire effects of his fall, which extend to his descendants in every age, may convince us that the hatred of God to sin is unalterable.

The universal destruction occasioned by the deluge, of which some remembrance is almost everywhere to be found, puts beyond dispute the righteousness of God. He opened the windows of heaven, and broke up the fountains of the great deep, to destroy the whole human race, except eight persons^f.

The fact of Christ's death is the most striking demonstration of the justice of God that ever was made.

In the punishment of the fallen Angels, of Adam, and of the old world, we see so many rebels suffering the just desert of their crimes: but in the crucifixion of Christ, we behold an innocent and perfect

^b Psalm vii. 11.

^c Psalm xi. 6, 7.

^d ib. ix. 17.

^e 2 Peter ii. 4.

^f 1 Peter iii. 20.

character, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," set forth to be a propitiation for sin through faith in his blood, to declare the righteousness of God for the remission of sins that are past; that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus^f.

Finally, almost every sin which can be mentioned has been visited with God's displeasure against presumptuous offenders. We may read in Scripture the following instances of Divine vengeance inflicted on transgressors. "Ham was cursed by Heaven for mocking his excellent father^g. The Wife of Lot was turned into a pillar of salt, and became a monument of wrath, because in her heart she lusted after Sodom^h. Envy and ambition were punished with horrible destruction in the untimely end of Korah, Dathan, and Abiramⁱ. The fate of Achan^k, and Gehazi's leprosy^l, mark the anger of God against covetousness." Fornication was punished in the persons of Zimri and Cosbi, by the javelin of Phineas thrust through their bodies^m. Twenty-four thousand people died in one day, by the judgment of God for the sin of whoredomⁿ. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead in a moment, for lying and prevarication^o. Elymas, the sorcerer, who, through infernal malice, opposed the right ways of the Lord, was smitten with blindness for his infidelity^p. And, lastly, Herod, king of the Jews, when delivering an oration he felt unduly elated with the blasphemous applause of his hearers, was suddenly stricken by the "Angel of the

^f Rom. iii. 26.

^g Gen. ix. 25.

^h ib. xix. 26.

ⁱ Numb. xvi. 31—36.

^k Josh. vii. 25.

^l 2 Kings v. 27.

^m Numb. xxv. 6—9.

ⁿ ib. xxv. 1—9.

^o Acts v. 1—11.

^p Acts xiii. 6—12.

Lord, and was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost, because he gave not glory to God^a.”

These characters are set before us in Scripture, to deter us from committing the same abominations : and we may gather from such instances, that every kind of sin and evil temper is very odious in the sight of God, and that his wrath certainly does abide on all transgressors ; to each of whom he thus speaks : “ Be ye sure your sin will find you out.”

Such, in his natural and moral perfections, is the God of Heaven. There is but one God : yet the Scripture teaches us, that, in the unity of the Divine essence, the Son and Spirit are comprehended, and are in glory equal, and in majesty co-eternal with the Father. Eternity, omnipresence, infinite knowledge, and resistless power belong to each person of the Holy Trinity ; and, therefore, they are together to be worshipped and glorified.

4. Reader, examine what your sentiments are respecting God ; whether they are taken from his word, or from the opinion of mankind. Search the matter to the bottom, in order that you may ascertain whether you know God as he has revealed himself, and are acting towards him as he requires.

Do you seriously believe that he bears a perfect hatred to all unrighteousness ? Are you prepared to acknowledge that God will be just in dooming incorrigible offenders to bear the weight of his indignation for ever in hell ? And can you admit, from the heart, that it would have been no derogation from his glory, had he cut you off in your sins, as a sacrifice to his deserved wrath ?

Do you believe that God is a defence to his people—a rewarder of them who diligently seek him ? In a

^a Acts xii. 21—24.

^r Numb. xxxii. 23.

word, Do you view God as unspeakably glorious in the redemption of Christ, and in the influences of the Spirit by which he maintains communion with the Universal Church ?

Unless we have a suitable acquaintance with God, we cannot pay him the adoration which he demands, or conceive properly of his perfect holiness and of our own guilt : and equally insensible shall we remain of our own spiritual necessities, or of the source from whence they may be supplied.

But the saving knowledge of God in Christ enriches the soul with a light, and life, and peace, and consolation, and strength, which cannot be otherwise obtained. It heals the corruption of our minds ; and keeps them steadfast in the path of obedience, until, at length, it brings its possessor to unspeakable happiness in the world of joy above.

LECTURE IV.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES CONTAIN A REVELATION OF
GOD'S WILL TO MEN.

2 Peter i. 21. *For the prophecy came not in old time, by the will of man ; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

THE expediency of a Divine Revelation will not be questioned by those who are deeply sensible of the mischief occasioned by the Fall. That disastrous event has covered the human soul with the grossest darkness ; insomuch, that the most palpable ignorance respecting God and heavenly things prevails not only among the poor and illiterate, but even among the learned and refined.

The benighted condition of the Pagan World is,

indeed, so obvious, as to require no arguments in proof of the necessity of a celestial light to give them the knowledge of the True God. Having no guide but reason, impaired or perverted by sin, they indulge in the most shocking crimes, without remorse. Their ideas of the Supreme Being are so low and obscure, and the religious worship which they profess to pay him is so debased by absurd and cruel rites, as to manifest that they are totally unacquainted with the spiritual nature of God, and the holy adoration which he expects. On these accounts, some communication of the Divine Will to man, from which he may learn the relation in which he stands to God, his obligations to honour him, and the consequences that will hereafter result from his good or bad conduct in this life, seems indispensably necessary. Without such a revelation, it is impossible for any of the human species, however intelligent in other respects, to form adequate notions of the uncreated God; or, by the mere deductions of unassisted reason, to ascertain either the measure or quality of that religious service which is due unto him.

A conviction of this truth was so prevalent before the advent of Christ, that several of the great Sages of antiquity acknowledged that a revelation from God was absolutely needful, to instruct erring mortals how they might "serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear^a." Some of them indulged a hope, that so desirable a blessing would, at some future period, be granted.

What they ardently wished, was a Divine boon reserved for us and our posterity. On us the light of Heavenly truth has shone with meridian splendour: congratulating one another on the Spiritual advan-

^a Heb. xii. 28.

tages which we possess above the Heathen, we may apply to ourselves the words of Jesus to his Disciples: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For, verily I say unto you, that many Prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them^b."

1. Revelation signifies a clear discovery made by God of important truths, which could not otherwise have been known. Most of the doctrines and many of the precepts of the Bible are of this description: our utmost sagacity could never have discovered them. We should, therefore, most highly esteem them, as an extraordinary and unsolicited favour conferred upon us.

2. The method which God chose for revealing himself to men is expressive of his consideration for their infirmities. He did not communicate his Will to us by a visible display of his own ineffable glory^c, or by the ministry of Angels (for the splendour of such appearances would have been overwhelming); but by committing it to writing, in order that all might have an opportunity of examining, and of rendering obedience to it.

There is no doubt, but that early communications of the Divine Will were made to our first parents in Paradise. We find God reminding them of the happiness of their state; of the means of retaining it; and condescending to give them rules for the regulation of their conduct^d.

These notices of the Divine pleasure were probably made, either orally, or by immediate inspiration on the mind. In either case, the revelation would be

^b Mat. xiii. 16, 17. ^c Ex. xx. 18, 19. xxxiii. 20. ^d Gen. ii. 16, 17.

sufficiently authoritative and explicit, to effect all the purposes for which it was vouchsafed. When men began to multiply, similar methods of communication were still resorted to: God successively revealed his Will, as occasion required, to Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

After the Patriarchal age, when the time came which God had fixed on for taking the Israelites into covenant with himself, Moses was selected, to make a faithful record of the most remarkable events that had happened from the Creation; and more especially, to teach and explain the Two Tables of the Law, which were written with the finger of God. The Ten Commandments, thus delivered, are to be received as a transcript of God's Will; and were intended to be of perpetual obligation amongst all nations, as a rule of life^a.

3. But, as God, after the Covenant of Works had been broken; established a New Covenant, which Christ was to ratify and seal with his own blood, he saw fit to raise up a succession of Prophets and good men, who, "at sundry times, and in divers manners," unfolded the amazing plan of our redemption by the Messiah; and foretold, with the greatest exactness, his advent, sufferings, triumphs, and exaltation to the right-hand of God.

After Christ's ascension, the Apostles were inspired, to publish more fully to the world a correct narrative of the life, death, and doctrines of our Divine Lord. Thus the sacred Canon of Scripture was completed; which is able, through faith in Christ, to "make us wise unto salvation;" but the neglect or abuse of which will subject us to the displeasure of God^b.

The inspired writings of the Old and New-Testament.

^a Matt. v. 19, 20. ^b 2 Tim. iii. 15. ^c Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

ments; thus communicated, are proposed to mankind as the infallible Word of God; from which it is presumptuous to make any appeal respecting matters of faith and practice". The judgment of the Church of England upon this point is decisive: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or to be thought requisite or necessary to salvation!"

The Bible affords satisfactory evidence of its being a revelation worthy of God; and adapted, in the highest degree, to promote the temporal and spiritual welfare of the human race.

This, and other important points which follow, can be but briefly touched upon; as a lengthened discussion of them would swell this publication beyond its intended size.

4. The antiquity of the Bible gives it a strong claim to a Divine original. It is manifestly the oldest book extant; for it mentions circumstances which occurred in the earliest ages, of which no clear records are to be found in the most ancient of uninspired writings. And there can be no reason to doubt, but that the obscure traditions found in profane authors, respecting the Creation, Deluge, and many other facts, were borrowed from Moses; and have been so studiously wrapped up in fable and allegory, as to conceal the source from whence they were derived^k.

The Mosaic Records lead our thoughts back to the commencement of time: they point us to a great First Cause, which gave birth to all things: and the account with which they furnish us of the Creation, and other facts which have perplexed the inquisitive in all ages,

^a *Isai. viii. 20.* ⁱ *Art. VI.* ^k See Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacrae*.

is both the most rational and convincing that was ever presented to the world¹.

5. The Bible represents God in such a light, as strongly vouches for its authenticity: therein the beautifully-diversified lineaments of the Divine character are so correctly drawn, that every one who contemplates the exhibition, with a serious mind, may discover such inimitable excellence in it, as ought to excite his love and veneration.

Let the Scriptures speak in their own majestic language, of the power, wisdom, mercy, justice, and benevolence of Almighty God. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth^m." "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding outⁿ!" "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them that fear him; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them^o." "Who is like unto thee, O Lord? glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders^p." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life^q."

How different is this description of the blessed God, from the accounts given by Pagan writers of those pretended Deities, whom the Heathen world has ignorantly adored! Jehovah is depicted in the Sacred Volume as a Being of transcendent goodness, veracity, and righteousness: but the false Deities of Pagans have been charged with every species of crime; and, doubtless, some of them were men of infamous character. Even their own votaries allow

¹ Gen. chap. i. ^m Ps. xxxiii. 6. ⁿ Rom. xi. 33.
^o Ps. ciii. 17, 18. ^p Exod. xv. 11. ^q John iii. 16.

that they are partial in the bestowment of their favours, and act under the sway of vindictive passions. From this short comparison, any one may easily decide, "who is the True God, and Eternal Life."

6. The doctrines and precepts of Scripture manifest its heavenly origin: "they are holy, just, and good:" they inculcate universal righteousness towards God and man. They propose the only true principles of holiness; and, at the same time, furnish us with the most effectual motives to pursue it: the worship they require us to pay to God, is such as is suited to his dignity. What, then, is more excellent and deserving of our serious attention, than the Word of God? Its claims to exclusive regard, as the only true Revelation, will strike us, on contrasting its doctrines with the dogmas of Paganism. The principles of Heathen Theology are impious, wicked, and absurd. The most solemn rites of Pagans are distinguished by such acts of cruelty, debauchery, licentiousness, and obscenity, as to demonstrate that they must have originated from the Father of Lies.

7. The infinitely great rewards proposed in the Scriptures to the obedient are, indeed, worthy of Him who offers them; whilst, at the same time, they bespeak the divinity of the book which contains them. The bliss promised to good men hereafter, is of such a nature, that it is as desirable as it is admirable. Unlike the fabled Elysium of Heathen Poets

* 1 John v. 20.

* Rom. vii. 12.

"Their 'abominable idolatries;' their frequent sacrifice of human victims; their exposure of innocent babes who are abandoned to a cruel death; their insatiable thirst of revenge; their cruelty to captives, and the barbarous spirit with which their wars are conducted; as well as the connivance which they give to theft, fraud, and dishonesty; demonstrate that much of the boasted light of Pagans is, indeed, the grossest darkness.

the Paradise of Mahomet, which hold out not but sensual delights, the felicity reserved in heaven for the righteous is spiritual and divine; it is so exalted, that, without the actual enjoyment of it, we can never duly appreciate its sublime treasures^u.

The happiness of the world is empty, insufficient, transitory; but the joys which are at God's hand are of a most satisfying kind, and are capable of filling up the largest desires of our souls: what renders them still more desirable, they are eternal in their duration as the throne of God which endureth for evermore.

And now we may confidently ask, Whether the Scriptures do not bear the most indubitable marks of a Revelation from God? Attested, as we shall see in the next Lecture, by miracles and prophecies, they carry a weight of evidence along with them, in support of their Divinity, which no reasonable man can resist. At least, if the Bible be not the Word of God, we know not where it can be found; since no other book furnishes such irrefragable proofs of its coming from him. There is, therefore, no other Reason, but that which is contained in the Holy Scriptures; and this ought to be duly estimated, on account of its Divine origin, and the benefit which it is capable of conveying. If God, in compassion to our ignorance, has given us a Book so able to make us wise and happy, we cannot be guilty of offering a greater affront to him, than to reject or neglect it. Such conduct is not only a impeachment of his wisdom, which deemed the Revelation necessary to our salvation, but argues a total inattention to our own well-being.

^u 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.

We can never be happy, but as we live in obedience to God: and how can we obey his commands, if we do not take pains to know what they are, from his Own Word?

9. Revelation, then, is to be received as the only guide to heaven. It is, indeed, a pole-star, to direct our course; under whose guidance we may safely "pass through the waves of this troublesome world till we arrive at the haven of eternal rest.

Let us acknowledge, with the deepest gratitude, the goodness of our Heavenly Father, in revealing himself to such unworthy creatures, whom he might have visited with wrathful indignation. The bestowment of so inestimable a gift demands suitable acknowledgments. We shall best discharge our obligations to God, by studying attentively the Sacred Book which he has put into our hands, in order to translate us "from darkness into his marvellous light." In proportion as we are swayed by its sublime truths, we shall advance in wisdom and righteousness; our knowledge of heavenly things will increase; and our hope of future glory be supported by the possession of present peace*.

* Rom. v. 1—6.

LECTURE V.

ON THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

2 Timothy iii. 16, 17. *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

"To inspire, literally signifies, to breathe upon, or to animate by supernatural infusion." This simple view of its meaning will enable us to ascertain, with greater

precision, in what sense inspiration is to be taken, when used in reference to the Sacred Writings.

“By the inspiration of the Sacred Writers, is to be understood that divine influence of the Holy Ghost upon their minds, through which they became acquainted with the will of God, and with doctrines and precepts, which neither they themselves nor others could ever have had any knowledge of by natural means; and, also, such a complete superintendence with regard to those matters of fact which they record on the testimony of credible witnesses, or from their own observation, as to exclude error and misrepresentation from the historical statements contained in their writings. Consequently, the sentiments taught in the Scriptures ought to be implicitly received, as the sure testimony of God, who cannot lie.”

Some of those reasons shall now be offered, which have led many of the wisest men, in every age, to submit to the authority of the Bible, as a book divinely inspired for the instruction of the world in righteousness.

1. The evidence arising from miracles furnishes convincing proof, both of the inspiration of the Bible, and of the Divine mission of those by whom they were wrought, who were empowered by God to perform them, in attestation of the truths they were commanded to teach.

Now, miracles which bear true marks of authenticity, such as those mentioned in Scripture, may be regarded as demonstrative proofs in favour of the revelation which they are intended to support*: and as none but a Divine Power is capable of working real miracles, we should consider those which have been performed in confirmation of the Christian Reli-

* See Douglas's Criterion of Miracles.

gion as so many vouchers to attest the truth: unless we can imagine it to be possible that God would lend his assistance for the establishment of falsehood, which is too impious a thought to be entertained for a single moment. I shall just glance at some of the most eminent miracles recorded in the Word of God. The plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians for refusing to liberate the Israelites from a most grievous bondage^b; the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, whilst the chosen people passed safely through, with the waters piled on each side of them^c; the abundant supply of water from the rock^d, and of manna every morning for forty years^e; the pillar of a cloud to guide them by day, and of fire by night^f; together with various interpositions in behalf of God's people^g; manifestly prove the Writings of Moses to be genuine, and that he acted under a Divine commission. These miracles were openly performed in the sight of the whole Jewish nation, who were competent witnesses of what they saw, and could never have been persuaded to believe the truth of what appeared doubtful, or had never happened. Besides, Moses appealed to these miracles in confirmation of his authority, as well as the care which God took of his people^h. But he would not have ventured on this appeal, if they had never been wrought; because the Jews could have so easily confronted him with the imposture.

The same conclusion may be safely drawn from the slightest examination of the miracles performed by Christ and his Apostles. The sustaining of several thousands of men and women with a few small loaves and fishes, whilst so large a surplus of frag-

^b Exod. vii. viii. ix. x. xi. xii.

^c ib. xiv.

^d ib. xvii.

^e ib. xvi.

^f ib. xiii.

^g Deut. i.

^h Deut. iv.

ments remained¹; the raising of the dead from the grave²; the giving of sight to the blind¹, speech to the dumb^m, and hearing to the deafⁿ; the removal of the most incurable diseases, by a word, touch, and other means, in themselves utterly inadequate^o; and, lastly, his own resurrection and subsequent ascension into heaven, are incontestible proofs of the truth of the Inspired Writings, and of the integrity of those who penned them. These miracles come to us attested by the most unexceptionable witnesses: they were not done secretly, or in a corner, like the lying wonders of impostors; but openly, in the presence of multitudes, whose united testimony is free from the least suspicion. They were publicly avouched at the time, with every material circumstance attending them. The names of the persons who were healed, and the places in which they were wrought, are mentioned; so that if they had been false or spurious, it was in the power of the enemies of Christianity to have disproved them; but they never denied the miracles, though they wickedly ascribed the performance of them to the agency of Satan.

2. The exact accomplishment of several remarkable prophecies, many ages after they were delivered, proves, beyond a reasonable doubt, the inspiration of the Scriptures, in which they are found. Some of these predictions have been long fulfilled; others are hourly fulfilling: some relate to events more connected with our own times; and the rest look, for their completion, to periods which may yet be considerably remote.

“The fulfilment of prophecy is a constant exhibition of miracles which demonstrate the truth of the

¹ Mark vi. 37—44.

² John xi. 1—46.

¹ ib. ix. 1—41.

^m Mark vii. 32—37.

ⁿ Mark, ib.

^o Mat. viii. 13—17.

Divine Word, and make a direct appeal to our understandings and senses: they court the most rigid scrutiny, and cannot fail to produce conviction on all who properly consider them."

The destruction of the Altar at Bethel, with the idolatrous Priests who conducted its worship, by Josiah, a long while after the judgment was denounced^p; the capture of Babylon, with the principal circumstances attending the siege of that city, and the mention of the conqueror's name^q; the desolation of Nineveh^r; the humiliation of Egypt, which became the basest of the kingdoms, and which has never since been able to exalt itself among the nations^s; the existence of the Jews as a distinct people, scattered abroad throughout the earth; the unshaken respect paid by them to the rites of the Mosaic economy, and to the several books of the Old Testament, which they venerate as the Oracles of God delivered to their progenitors; decidedly vouch for the antiquity and veracity of those writings.

The prophecies in the Old Testament which refer to the birth, life, kingdom, sufferings, death, resurrection, and exaltation of our blessed Saviour, when compared with the complete fulfilment in the New, evince, to a demonstration, that they were written by inspiration of God, whose prerogative it is "to declare the things that shall be hereafter."

The predictions of Christ and his Apostles equally demand our attention.

The destruction of Jerusalem, and the calamities brought upon it by the Roman armies^t; the rapid progress of the Gospel, in spite of all the opposition

^p 1 Kings xiii. 1, 2. ^q 2 Kings xxiii. 15—21.

^r Isai. xlv. 1—3. xiii. xiv.

^s Nah. i. ii. iii.

^t Ezek. xxix. 14—16.

^u Luke xix. 41—45.

which it would have to encounter^u; the various corruptions of Christianity^v; the idolatry, tyranny, and sanguinary persecutions of Rome, Papal and Imperial^w; with the existence and continuance of the Christian Religion to this day, after the repeated efforts of its enemies to extirpate it;—these remarkable events, which have been fulfilled, afford satisfactory evidence that the writings which contain them are, indeed, the infallible Word of God.

3. The complete harmony which subsists among the Sacred Writers is no inconsiderable argument of their own inspiration, and of the truth of the Divine Records themselves. They nowhere advance contradictory accounts of the creation of the world, the perfections of God, and the obligations of men. They agree in their representations of the malignity and demerit of sin; and point us to Christ only, for deliverance from its condemning power and polluting effects^x. They inculcate the same heavenly truths, and apply them to the same practical uses: in a word, they speak of every religious subject relating to our duty and happiness, in such a manner, as to prove that they are all of the same judgment, and strive to establish the same principles. Whence, then, is this entire coincidence? It could not be the result of a pre-concerted plan to impose falsehood upon the world; for the Inspired Writers did not all exist at the same time, but succeeded each other, during a long interval of many centuries. Nor could it arise from any similarity in their habits, employments, and education; for there was the greatest diversity amongst them in these respects. Some of them were prophets and kings; others were shepherds, fishermen, and

^u Mat. xvi. 17, 18. ^v Acts xx. 28—31. 1 Tim. iv. 1—4.

^w 2 Thess. ii. ^x Acts x. 43.

artificers. Now, that so exact an agreement should be found in the writings of persons of such different habits, living in ages so remote from one another, is truly unaccountable, unless we admit that they wrote under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit of God.

We shall arrive at the same conclusion, from considering the peculiar nature of Scripture doctrines, and the light which they throw upon the characters of mankind.

The incarnate Deity of Jesus Christ ; redemption through his vicarious sacrifice ; and the mysterious union of Three Divine Persons in the Godhead ; are doctrines for which we are solely indebted to Revelation.

The same thing may be observed with regard to the judgment which the Divine Word passes upon our state and conduct. It does not coincide with the false estimate which men generally form of themselves ; nor does it condescend to flatter the pride, or to accommodate its requisitions to the wicked propensities, of our fallen nature : on the contrary, it lays open our faults ; and whilst it freely censures, it tells us how to escape the punishment due to our offences. The condition of man as a depraved creature is described with so much accuracy in the Bible, that whoever impartially examines his own experience by this standard, will be convinced that the Book which thus discloses the hidden springs of human action must have been written by inspiration of God.

4. Objections have been urged against the Scriptures, because they contain some things which are highly mysterious. It was natural to expect that this would be the case ; for a revelation of the Divine Will, without any thing in it above our limited comprehension, would carry its own refutation with it.

God is incomprehensible in all his works, even the most inconsiderable, as the growth of a blade of grass. And can we expect to discover no traces of mystery in the amazing scheme of redemption by Christ, into which angels look with holy astonishment ?

But even the mysteries of religion are not without their use and importance. They lay a foundation for our faith, humility, and reverence. Besides, it should be remembered, that the most sublime truths of the Bible, though far above our reason, are not contrary to it. They imply no contradiction in themselves ; and, therefore, can never be proved to be impossible and false. And, as God has made an explicit communication of every doctrine necessary to our salvation, let us gratefully acknowledge the benefit, and implicitly receive what is more obscure, upon His authority ; waiting patiently for the time, when we shall better understand and estimate it^a.

5. It has been asserted, that "the Word of God abounds with palpable contradictions." It cannot be denied, that seeming inconsistencies will sometimes strike the superficial reader, which vanish on a more accurate examination. Let but the more difficult passages be fairly compared with others that speak the same truths in more familiar language, and it will be manifest, that Scripture never opposes itself ; but, that one part of Sacred Writ sheds light upon another, so as to produce a glorious harmony in its representations of celestial things.

6. Others have objected to the Scripture on account of the supposed poverty of its style, as if it were not written eloquently enough for the wiser part of mankind. Not to insist that several of the most learned men have declared that some portions

^a John xiii. 7.

of Holy Writ are expressed in the loftiest strains of sublimity, we conceive that pride lies at the bottom of the objection; for the Scriptures were not written to instruct men in the principles of natural wisdom; but "to make them wise unto salvation." It plainly argues, then, the goodness of God, in granting a revelation which is at once adapted to the understanding of all descriptions of men.

7. Furthermore, the powerful tendency of the Scriptures to promote the cause of righteousness in the world, is manifest, not only from its own intrinsic excellence, but from the marked piety of those holy men who have conformed to its precepts. Living in the fear of God, and conscientiously discharging every duty, the primitive Saints and Christians waited for the heavenly inheritance promised to them that obey the Lord^b.

8. The striking effects which are still produced by the Word of God on the hearts of men shew that its efficacy is Divine. Wherever it is cordially believed, and submitted to, the most beneficial effects invariably follow. The drunkard forsakes the inebriating draught, and becomes sober. Sensual, intemperate, and debauched persons, renouncing their criminal pleasures, cultivate habits of chastity and moderation. The covetous become liberal: the miser, who formerly paid adoration to his gods of silver and gold, is made ashamed of his base devotion, and is ready to communicate to the relief of the necessitous: in a word, multitudes, who were addicted to every species of sin, have been reclaimed to a life of justice, sobriety and godliness, by simply perusing the Scriptures, and obeying their directions. The reason why these effects are not more universally produced,

^b Hebrews xi. 7—17.

is, because, through the depravity of their hearts, men refuse to walk in the light which Revelation affords them. Were men in their respective stations always to act according to the dictates of the Bible, what harmony, peace, righteousness, and benevolence, would everywhere prevail! Murder, oppression, injustice, cruelty, persecution, theft, dishonesty, and avarice, would be unknown; wars, contentions, animosities, implacable hatred, and a thirst of revenge, would cease to exert their deadly influence; and men, regarding each other as brethren, would "live together in unity and godly love."

9. Several collateral proofs might be brought to confirm the authority of the Bible; such as the integrity and righteousness of the Inspired Writers, which made it impossible for them to deceive others; and the miraculous powers displayed in behalf of their mission evince that they could not be deceived themselves. The resolution with which many of them persisted in their testimony, though it exposed them to the greatest losses and the most shocking deaths, demonstrates that they could have had no other object to answer by it, than the promotion of the Divine glory, and the common benefit of mankind. Moreover, the frequent appeals made to the Scriptures, soon after they were written; the wide circulation of the Sacred Books, which were translated into the various languages of different countries; and the veneration in which they have been constantly held by good men; are presumptive arguments in favour of the inspiration of the Sacred Writings^c. In addition to the reasons before stated, for believing the inspiration of the Scriptures, another may be subjoined, which

^c See Paley's Theology, in which these proofs are fully discussed.

ought not to be undervalued. It has often been observed, that "Satan could never have influenced men to write the Bible, for then he would have been divided against himself; wicked men would not have penned a book which so awfully condemns their whole conduct; and good men would never have ascribed their own inventions to Divine inspiration, especially as such forgeries are most severely reprobated in every part of it. But, indeed, it is a work as much exceeding every effort of a mere creature, as the sun surpasses those faint luminaries, by which his splendour is imitated, or his absence supplied. Not one of the various proofs brought to establish the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures can be fairly answered; at least, it has never yet been done: and the combined force of the whole is so great, that the objections with which Infidels cavil against the truth, only resemble the foaming waves dashing against the deep-rooted rock which has for ages defied their unavailing fury."

10. To add one more suggestion: Let the wavering consider, that "the consequences of their present conduct are, according to the Bible, so momentous, that if there were only a bare possibility of the truth of the Scriptures, it would be madness to run the risk of rejecting them, for the sake of gaining the whole world. What folly then is it, when we have such unanswerable demonstrations that they are the word of God, and cannot reasonably doubt of it for a moment, to disobey the commands and neglect the salvation revealed therein, for the greatest temporal advantage which we can obtain? especially as it may be shewn, that, besides the eternal consequences, the firm belief of the Scriptures, and that conscientious obedience which true faith always produces, will ren-

let a man happier in this present life, even amidst trials and self-denying services, than he could be made by all the pomp, pleasure, wealth, power, and honour, which the world can bestow." "Godliness is," therefore, in every point of view, "great gain, and is profitable unto all things; for it has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come^d."

^d Timothy iv. 8. vi. 6.

LECTURE VI.

ON THE DESIGN, AND UNSPEAKABLE VALUE, OF THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES.

Psalms xix. 10, 11. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

It is an axiom of the soundest philosophy, that God does nothing in vain. All His works, even the most minute, bear the stamp of perfect wisdom, and of infinite contrivance and skilfulness. It is unreasonable, therefore, to suppose that God would have made a revelation of his will to us, unless he had had some special object in view, by so doing. The Volume of Sacred Writ expressly tells us what ends God proposed to himself, in communicating his will to mankind; so that we are not left to fancy or conjecture.

1. It declares the expediency of such a measure, for acquainting us with the nature of God, and the means of attaining true happiness. Now these are designs worthy of God, and beneficial to his creatures.

It is right that the glorious Majesty of Heaven should be honoured by all. But how could the

nature and character of God be fully known, or the respect justly due to him defined, without clear information on these subjects? And from what source was this knowledge to be obtained? Certainly not from the light of reason, which, in its highest exercise, has never shewn itself equal to so great a task. The most polished people, with every advantage that science could bestow, have given sufficient proofs of the justice of these observations. Jehovah, therefore, must have disclosed these things to the world; or he would have remained unknown, and have been inadequately and improperly worshipped. But, now that he has deigned "to make his ways known on earth, his saving health among all nations," we shall be inexcusable, if we do not profit by his kindness, and render him the devout homage of a cheerful obedience.

2. Though the Divine glory seems to have been the primary and ultimate object of Revelation, yet our present and future happiness was certainly an important end to be answered by it. Jehovah having formed us capable of enjoying everlasting bliss, it was not surprising that he should unfold the particular method by which it might be secured. Accordingly, the Scriptures explicitly state the relation in which we stand to God, and the duties which it exacts from us. They tell us that "we are the work of his own hands;" and that we so absolutely depend on him, that we cannot live, move, or continue in existence for a moment, without his express permission. Hence arise our obligations to honour and obey God, with all the energy of our minds.

The Word of God is designed to answer the double purpose, of making us acquainted with our lost con-

Rom. i. 21—32. 1 Cor. i. 1—31.

dition, and the means to be used for our recovery to a state of original righteousness. All its representations of human nature are verified by experience. It describes the souls of men as being by nature absolutely dead in trespasses and sins; as being polluted, and darkened, without any spiritual feelings, or desires, after God^b. Facts prove the truth of this affecting statement: yet the Scriptures, more intent upon discovering the mercy of God, dwell at greater length upon the means which he has provided for our restoration. They set forth, in the most inviting form, a remedy suited to remove our spiritual maladies, with all their symptoms: they offer sight to the spiritually blind, knowledge to the ignorant, sanctification to the unholy, health to the sick, food to them that "hunger and thirst after righteousness," and life to those who "are dead in trespasses and sins." How important is it, therefore, to ascertain the mind of God, as declared in his Word; which is a fountain of light, to guide us into the way of everlasting life! There we may discern how he is to be worthily revered; there the terms, on which salvation is bestowed, are laid open so clearly, "that the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein;" there we learn, as far as is necessary for our comfort, what heaven is, with the means of acquiring a meetness for inheriting it.

Reflect, then, on the compassionate goodness of the Lord, in bestowing his Word upon us for such important ends. He designs to make us wise, good, and happy, by disposing us to embrace and obey the heavenly truths therein delivered; blessings which thousands have already received from its instructions. That it is able to produce such salutary

^b Eph. iv. 18—20. v. 14.

effects upon us, when we seriously believe and submit to its influence, is undeniably certain. Make trial of its efficacy ; and you will find that it chases away the ignorance of the mind, purifies the heart, breaks the force of evil habits, calms the violence of passion, and constrains us to "press," with unabating constancy, "toward the mark for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus."

3. The foregoing remarks teach us the vast importance of the Bible ; yet, other reasons may here be given, which considerably enhance its worth.

The momentous doctrines which the Scriptures lay before us, claim the most profound respect. It is true, some of the Heathen Writers have delivered sentiments that bear a resemblance to truths and precepts contained in the Bible, "such as, the existence of a God who made and governs all things ; the necessity of temperance, justice, and kindness ;" yet, at the same time, they were unable to disclose the mystery of a Trinity, the glad tidings of redemption by Christ, and the excellent rewards which await a pious life in another state : these, and other important matters, it is the province of God alone to communicate. Besides, their precepts lost much of their weight, in wanting those strong motives to enforce them, which a Divine revelation only can suggest. Pagan Moralists often urged their followers to the performance of acknowledged duties, not from feelings of love and gratitude to God, but from motives of present expediency, and from a thirst of human applause and distinction.

However reluctant many are to confess their obligations to God for his Word, it is probable that all, or most of those maxims which have been so highly ex-

altered as the oracles of reason, were borrowed at first from the Scriptures. At all events, human precepts, though ever so wise or reasonable, can never be set forth as the standard of religious truth; because they are destitute of those Divine sanctions which are requisite to give them proper authority.

On the contrary, the real excellence of the doctrines and precepts of the Bible, their obvious tendency to promote our welfare, and, above all, their Divine inspiration, stamp a value upon the Sacred Book containing them, which nothing can efface.

Other discoveries, such as those which are made in science, beneficial as they undoubtedly are to society, refer only to the transient interests of the present life. But the grand truths of our holy religion have a more sublime origin, and a more noble end: they come down from the Father of Lights; and, whilst they grant their friendly aid to conduct us safely through this benighted wilderness, they, at the same time, point "to fairer worlds on high;" where, if we have died in the faith of Christ, we shall realize those gracious promises with which they have cheered our path below.

4. Whether we consider the character of the donor, or the nature of the grant which he has made, the Bible will unquestionably appear to be a gift of inconceivable value. God, the King of heaven, has conferred it upon us. Now, as he never acts without a design worthy of himself, we must conclude that the donation of the Scriptures is a gift as necessary as it is important.

The Israelites were taught to consider themselves as a people distinguished above every other, "chiefly because that unto them were committed the Oracles of God^d." Our privileges greatly exceed theirs.

^d Rom. iij. 2; Deut. iv. 1—9.

They had nothing but the types and shadows of good things to come : we have the very substance and reality of them. They had only indistinct views of the glory of Messiah's kingdom, the whole splendour of which was reserved to illuminate us Gentiles. They had but a portion of the Sacred Books which comprise the Canon of Scripture : we are in possession of the whole.

5. The quality of a gift increases or diminishes its value. We esteem some things more than others, either on account of their intrinsic excellence, or because they are more necessary to our comfort, or are more seasonably bestowed. In these respects, the Scriptures are inestimably precious. What gift could be more important, or more needed by the world, than the Gospel? Before the advent of Jesus, mankind, not liking to retain God in their knowledge, "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened^c." And when Christ came, the moral and religious aspect of the world was not a whit better. At that memorable æra, philosophy had exerted its ingenuity in vain, to find out the road to happiness. Various opinions were offered concerning the origin of evil, and the best means of obviating its effects. But human sagacity was incapable of discovering the cause, or of estimating the malignity of the disease, much less of devising a cure. Depravity still lifted up its deformed head, and refused to yield to the insufficient remedies which philosophy proposed. Now, the wisdom of God was seen triumphing over the boasted reason and science of this world. Now, the auspicious hour was come, for the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, to reveal the counsels of mercy to ruined men. Accordingly, as soon as the Incar-

^c Rom. i. 21—29.

nate Word entered on his ministry, he proclaimed, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel^a." "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness, but have the light of life^b." This message, first uttered by Christ, afterwards by his Apostles, and now by faithful Ministers, has been joyfully received by thousands, who, in consequence thereof, have turned from idolatry and iniquity, to "serve the Living and True God, and to wait for his Son from heaven^c."

The change effected in the morals, religion, and habits of this favoured country should induce us to venerate the Scriptures, which, under the blessing of Heaven, have been the principal cause of so marvellous a reformation. Viewed in this light, they merit the high eulogium pronounced on them by the Psalmist: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be desired are they than gold, yea, than fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb: moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward^d."

^a Mark i. 15.

^b Thess. i. 1—10.

^c John xii. 46. viii. 12.

^d Psalm xix. 7—11.

LECTURE VII.

ON THE STATE OF INNOCENCE IN PARADISE.

Ecclesiastes vii. 29. Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

GOD undoubtedly made our first parents upright and happy^a. Yet so short was the continuance of primæval bliss, that but little notice is taken of it by Moses. Sufficient, however, is said concerning it, to afford us a faint conception of its supreme excellence; and, consequently, of the dreadful loss sustained by them, and their posterity, when it was forfeited. We shall cursorily touch upon the perfection and felicity of that blessed state.

That it was a condition of great moral excellence, we learn from the sacred historian's concise account of man's original formation: "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them^b."

The expression is doubled, that it may more engage our attention, and ensure our belief. This image and likeness of God cannot be in the body: for God is a spirit, which no bodily shape can in any respect resemble. We must therefore look for it in the soul; and there we shall find it, according to the measure in which finite can resemble Infinite Being. Even in the present state of human nature, the soul of man bears some faint resemblance to its Maker. The understanding, memory, and imagination, in their several operations, exhibit a faint shadow of the Divine wisdom and knowledge: the will, and the powers of action which it commands, have some similitude

^a Jer. xi. 2.

^b Gen. i. 27.

to the almighty effects of the Divine volition; and shew that mind can act on matter, though we cannot explain in what manner: nay, conscience, in the exercise of her dictatorial and judicial functions, gives a feeble reflection of the justice and holiness of the Judge of All; whilst the derived and dependent immortality of the human soul reminds us of Him who is self-existent and eternal^{bb}.

Christians, who become (through renewing grace, in the most important respects) what Adam was by creation, bear a measure at least of resemblance to God: they have "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;" or, as it is elsewhere expressed, they "have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him^d."

1. With these spiritual gifts, Adam and Eve were endued in that degree which was suited to their condition as creatures, in whom such perfections must necessarily be limited. In the constitution and disposition of their minds they were naturally good and upright. Integrity, with all its attendant beauties, formed the element, habit, and delight of their souls. They were so thoroughly conformed to the Divine law, which was substantially engraven on their hearts, as to be able to obey all its precepts: and their constant observance of that law constituted the righteousness of their state before God. Thus the unwearied pursuit of holiness was the great object, to the attainment of which their endeavours were to be directed.

This righteousness would evince itself in their perfect accordance with the will of Heaven. There

^{bb} Scott's Commentary on Genesis i. 26, 27.

^c Ephes. iv. 24.

^d Coloss. iii. 10.

was no propensity in them to evil; no inclination to allow themselves in any sin; no bias on the side of depraved gratification; for that would have been inconsistent with the state of rectitude in which they were formed. On the contrary, they were disposed to follow whatever their Maker approved, and studiously to shun every thing he forbade.

Yet the event shewed that their will was not so entirely confirmed, as to be exempt from exposure to mutability and error. Their minds were liable to be tempted to commit evil, though God had inclined them only towards good. This admission does not, by any means, reflect on the Divine goodness: for, if our first parents had been formed unchangeably righteous, it must have been by the especial gift of God; and then they could not have been fixed in a probationary state, in which alone a person can conduct himself so as to become the proper subject of praise or blame. Scripture affirms—and the result proves—that they were made “sufficient to have stood; yet free,” if they abused their liberty, “to fall.”

Again: The integrity of Adam's state before his fall evidenced itself in the purity of his affections. Man's appetites no doubt, even then, were carried toward objects grateful to the senses; yet these motions of the animal nature were under the direct controul of reason, and exercised in a due subordination to the welfare of his immortal soul. So long as he retained his innocence, no earthly object was permitted to usurp that place in his heart, which exclusively belonged to God, whose pleasure was the sole law by which he acted. Heavenly things therefore, as conducing to his best interests, would be preferred to any sensual gratification whatever. His

mind, free from evil concupiscence, chose God as his portion ; and his favour, as an unfailing source of happiness.

2. Knowledge was the other branch of excellence peculiar to the primitive state. Adam, made after the Divine likeness, possessed a clear and vigorous understanding. His acquaintance with God and the varied works of his hand, seem to have been very extensive. He must be supposed to have well understood the will of his Maker ; otherwise he could not have been qualified to enter into covenant with him, whereby he bound himself to perpetual obedience. He knew that God was unalterably holy, just, and good ; that he loved righteousness, and hated iniquity. This knowledge of the Divine Being, and the obligation he was laid under, by it, to honour him, would greatly assist Adam in his endeavours to preserve the happiness which he was in possession of ; and be a forcible motive for constant vigilance, that he might obtain the promised reward. His acquaintance with the works of God shews that he had a greater and more correct knowledge of their real nature, by intuition, than the best-informed minds can now attain by diligent study and investigation. Notice his sagacity in giving names to the different species of animals, descriptive of their properties and habits*.

3. The felicity of such an exalted state must have been indescribably great. Adam, when he came out of the hands of his Maker, was, in common with the rest of his works, pronounced to be "very good." Indeed, he was a glorious creature, "possessing a sound mind and a healthy body." None of those maladies, which often prove fatal to many of his de-

* Gen. ii. 19, 20.

† ib. i. 31.

scendants, afflicted him. His body was a fit tabernacle for the residence of his spirit, and conspired with it in glorifying God. Being thus formed capable of serving him, and contemplating his perfections he was the favourite of God, an object of his high regard. He was permitted to hold familiar intercourse with his Maker, before guilt effected a separation. Privileged with access to God, who smiled on him "as one whom he delighted to honour," we may reasonably suppose that no favour was withheld which could either augment or secure his happiness.

Besides; Adam was immortal. The day in which he was formed in the image of God, "he became a living soul," endued with a principle of immortality. He was therefore qualified for the endless fruition of God; of which nothing but his voluntary apostacy could deprive him. Under such circumstances, the existence of our first parents would be happy beyond expression. All that the Poets have fabled of the Golden Age, or the delights of the Heather Elysium, falls short of giving us an adequate idea of man's bliss in Paradise, which was a striking type of the felicity of heaven itself. It must have been a life of great intellectual enjoyment. They would derive much satisfaction from the constant exhibition of God's wisdom, power, and goodness; which would at the same time, expand their minds with the most valuable knowledge. Possessed of holy affections, their breasts would be happily devoid of shame, remorse, and fear. No anxious cares would disturb them by day; no alarms would disquiet them by night. Innocence was depicted in their lovely countenances, which were a true index of the purity of their souls. At peace with God and themselves and "in league with the beasts of the field," who

quietly submitted to their authority, they had no danger to apprehend, but enjoyed the sweetest tranquillity. This state of Paradisaical enjoyment was heightened by the liberal provision which the Lord had made to afford delight to his creatures. Constituted sovereign of the lower world, creation smiled on Adam as its rightful lord, and acknowledged his power. The earth teemed with plenty, and, without much culture, supplied them with an abundant succession of herbs, fruits, and plants. The garden of Eden, a spot consecrated by God, yielded every species of fruit and flower, to regale their senses, and minister support to their bodies^a.

Thus nothing was wanting to complete the happiness of Adam and Eve, but gratitude and obedience. Happy in the friendship of God, and having a promise of increasing felicity, they might have contemplated the prospect of their translation to heaven with great delight; where, had they retained their innocence, they would have inherited "fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore^b."

^a Gen. ii. 8, 9.

^b Psalm xvi. 11.

LECTURE VIII.

ON THE COVENANT OF WORKS—ITS VIOLATION, BY THE FALL OF OUR FIRST PARENTS FROM THE STATE OF INNOCENCE—THE PENAL CONSEQUENCES ATTACHED TO THAT OFFENCE.

Romans v. 12. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

MAN, when he came out of the hands of his Maker, was gifted with sufficient powers to perform all the duties which his relation to God demanded.

Being thus fitted for communion with the Lord it was reasonable that Adam should submit to His government, and glorify him by an unreserved obedience to his commands. With this view, he entered into a covenant of works; which was so styled because it bound him to a strict performance of all that God had enjoined him to do.

The contracting parties were, on the one side God in Trinity; and on the other, Adam for himself, and in behalf of his posterity, inasmuch as he is the root and stock whence all mankind proceed.

This covenant was an agreement respecting the means of obtaining complete happiness; including a threatening of God's displeasure, upon its infraction by man.

The law of the covenant of works was, in all human probability, the same in substance with the Ten Commandments, afterwards delivered by Moses which are summed up in the following words of our Saviour: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself^a."

The covenant was accompanied by two sacramental signs or seals;—"the tree of life; and the tree of knowledge of good and evil^b." The former was a sort of pledge, to assure our first parents of eternal life, as a reward for their obedience: the latter was the seal of death, in case of transgression: the use of which God forbade, saying, "Thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die^c."

The law of the covenant was legibly engraven on

^a Matt. xxii. 37—41.

^b Gen. ii. 9.

^c ib. ii. 17.

the soul of Adam, at his creation, by the Spirit of the Lord ; so that he clearly understood its nature, and the extent of its demands. Besides, he had the strongest motives imaginable to induce him to act prudently in a transaction of such high concern. He most probably knew, that if he, as the federal head of mankind, failed in keeping the covenant, the whole human race would be involved in the sad effects of his miscarriage ; as also, that, in the event of his obedience, his own, and the felicity of countless millions of his descendants, would be secured and increased. Never, therefore, could a covenant be made with more justice on the part of God ; or with a better prospect of every benefit resulting from it to man. The Almighty proposed no other ends to himself in covenanting with his creatures, but his own glory, and their temporal and eternal happiness. Adam was bound, therefore, to accept the covenant of his God, and render it a cheerful obedience.

The terms or conditions on which it was founded, were a perfect and perpetual obedience : according to the tenor of the covenant, God was to be loved supremely^{cc}. No earthly object was allowed to steal away the affections of Adam and Eve, or alienate their hearts from His pure and holy service. In short, nothing was to be put in competition with the favour of God, to whom they owed their existence, and whatever they possessed, or might afterwards expect to obtain. The covenant of works made no allowance for any deviations from its just rule, through surprise or temptation. It condemned the least, as well as the greatest sin. It took cognizance of the thoughts and desires of the mind. It forbade vicious imaginations ; and required the utmost integrity, both

^{cc} Mat. xxii. 37.

in principle and practice. Nor was this perfect observance of the Divine will to be limited in its duration : it was to continue without interruption, to the end of their existence.

Upon such equitable terms, God promised a never-ending source of happiness to Adam. And of what did it consist ? I answer : Of every thing that could ennoble and rejoice the soul, even the unceasing enjoyment of God in heaven ; an exemption from all evil ; and the possession of the most satisfying good. Here was, indeed, a high recompence offered, as the price of obedience. What more could God propose, or man desire ? Nothing, then, seems to have been wanting, to call forth the love and gratitude and dutiful homage of our first parents. Their felicity centered in the Lord of Hosts, who was willing, whilst they hearkened to His laws, to do for them " such things as pass man's understanding." To manifest, however, at the same time, his just abhorrence of iniquity, and to declare his sovereign right to the religious service of his creatures, he enforced the observance of the covenant, by the most awful sanctions. Whilst it said, " This do, and thou shalt live," it threatened the least offence with death. With a prospect of so much glory on the one hand, and of so great misery on the other, one would have thought the first man was likely to prove invulnerable against the assaults of temptation. But the Scriptures inform us, that this expectation was soon disappointed. Adam and Eve, yielding to the suggestions of the Devil, brought on themselves the displeasure of God.

1. How long that happy period, which was the subject of the former chapter, lasted, is not certain ; though the rapid transition of the historian, from the

state of man's primæval innocence, to the Fall, inclines us to believe it was not of very long duration. It seems to have passed away "as the morning cloud and early dew;" or, like a shadow quickly following its substance, it vanished almost as soon as it made its appearance.

The history of man's defection from God, as well as many other facts of the greatest consequence, is related in a brief and simple manner; not to gratify an idle curiosity, but to furnish matter for profitable reflection. And if we attend, in a proper spirit, to the affecting narrative, we cannot fail to gather from it much spiritual instruction.

2. To remind Adam of his dependence on God, and the necessity of carefully guarding his integrity, his Maker thought it right to forbid him the use of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This prohibition was designed as a trial of his affection; and, after so large a grant of every other comfort, could not be thought unreasonable, or severe^d. Submission to the restraint was so easy, and the reward promised to obedience so infinitely glorious, as to hold out the strongest inducement to perseverance in "the right ways of the Lord." With every motive to preserve his own bliss, and that of others, committed as a precious deposit to his care, he fell from his allegiance to God, and involved himself, and all mankind, in the guilt of transgression and rebellion against the Most High.

Let us trace the steps which led to this disastrous event; and state the fatal results which it produced.

God made the angels supremely holy: yet some of them, fired with ambition, rebelled against their Sovereign; and were cast into hell, to be punished

^d Gen. ii. 16, 17.

according to their deserts*. Filled, on this account, with enmity against God, they have set up a kingdom in direct opposition to his, under the authority of the Devil. Hence they strenuously labour to do mischief, by tempting men to revolt from God, in order that they may become as miserable as themselves.

Soon after Adam and Eve were formed, these wicked spirits concerted a plan to seduce them, and destroy that felicity which provoked their envy. Satan, the prince of darkness, undertook to conduct the malignant enterprise. With a craft suited to the occasion, he concealed himself under the form of a serpent, to cover his foul designs. He spake through the organs of that animal, which probably then appeared uncommonly beautiful and remarkably sagacious, and by this means more easily deluded our first parents.

The Devil was certainly the real agent in this affair; the serpent performing only a constrained part. The names by which he is called, demonstrate this; such as, "The great dragon, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, and Apollyon[†]." The account of that transaction is as follows: "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as

* 2 Peter ii. 4.—Jude vi.

† Rev. xii. 9.—ix. 11.

gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat^f."

Mark with what dexterity and artifice Satan conducted the temptation. He did not at once propose to them to break the Divine injunction, lest their minds should be shocked with the base proposal; but proceeded cautiously to work, the better to ensure the success of his plot. He commenced with an attack on the woman, by insinuating a doubt respecting the equity of the command which had been given: perceiving that she was disposed to hearken to his suggestions, he assumed a bolder tone, and flatly contradicted the Divine threatening, with an assurance, that on tasting the forbidden fruit, she would derive the greatest advantage. At length, believing his lying representations, she was persuaded to commit the fatal act.

Eve, by her solicitations, prevailed on Adam to partake of the fruit; and thus he became a principal in the guilt of the whole transgression. Thus the covenant of works was shamefully broken, its promises forfeited, and all the curses it denounced against sin, incurred. Thus man fell from his integrity, and became wicked and miserable^g.

3. Jehovah, to vindicate his own honour, immediately passed sentence on the offence of Adam and Eve. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened

^f Gen. iii. 1—7.

^g Rom. v. 12.

unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field: in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return^h.

Let us contemplate the nature of this penalty, and the change which the apostacy of our first parents made in their condition: "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." This sentence involved three kinds of death.

First, temporal death was intended. They were immortal at their creation. And had they held fast their innocence, they would most probably have been translated to heaven, without experiencing the agonies of dissolution. But now they became mortal, and obnoxious to bodily death; the seeds of which were sown within them, on the very day they sinned. It is true they lived several hundred years after the sentence had been pronounced against them; for this reason, perhaps, because they were the appointed progenitors of the human race: yet they did not escape the pains of that natural death, to which their rebellion had subjected them^h. Their bodies, which before were always healthy, now underwent a material change: besides being exposed to various diseases and numerous evils, to shame, pain, and want, they were, by the Fall, despoiled of their original beauty and glory.

Secondly, spiritual death was incurred. The Divine image stamped on their minds was now totally

^h Gen. iii. 16—20.

^h ib. v. 5.

lost. That heart, which was once the seat of holy affections, was now defiled with impure desires, and became "the habitation of every unclean spirit." Before the Fall, the passions and appetites were kept in due subjection; but now they became disorderly, sought forbidden gratifications, and were made the springs of the greatest mischief to mankind.

Once righteousness, peace, contentment, and confidence in God, lodged in the soul; but now guilt, distrust, alarm, dissatisfaction, and dreadful forebodings of deserved wrath, usurped their place. In the state of innocence, it afforded our first parents the most delightful satisfaction to consult and to do the will of God: now, having lost both the will and the power to serve him, they fled from his presence with terrorⁱ. Once they enjoyed communion with God, and sought his glory; but now, having forsaken him, and bearing the image of Satan, they acted in unison with him, and revolted more and more against the King of heaven.

Thirdly, the sentence included eternal death. Everlasting separation from God, the loss of his kingdom of glory, and the endurance of unceasing wrath, made up the full measure of those sufferings, to which Adam and Eve were doomed: and had not the sentence been accompanied with some intimations of mercy, through a promised Saviourⁱⁱ, they would, perhaps, have fallen victims to despair.

Thus they lost that moral excellence which adorned them in the primitive state, and became "earthly, sensual, and devilish^k." How great a change was thus wrought in Adam's condition! He, who was once Lord of the creation, was driven out of Paradise in disgrace^{kk}. Before, he was the Son of God, his

ⁱ Gen. iii.8—11. ⁱⁱ ib. iii.15. ^k Ja. iii.15. ^{kk} Gen. iii.22—24.

peculiar favourite, on whom he smiled with complacency; but now he became the Child of the Devil, and was cast out of God's sight, as an object of his sore displeasure. He, who was once the legal heir of the celestial inheritance, was now suddenly deprived of all his privileges, and exposed to everlasting wrath.

4. Who can help lamenting this mournful catastrophe, and saying, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O son of the morning!" "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!"

Had this disaster affected none but our first parents, even then it might justly have excited the most sincere regret. But the fact is, all of us are deeply involved therein. Adam, being appointed the great representative of mankind, when he fell from God the whole human race was implicated in his sin; for the covenant which he engaged to obey was made not merely with him, but with all his posterity, who were virtually in his loins when he apostatized from God: so that his offence became theirs by imputation; and they shared in the penalty attached to it, just in the same way as they would have been benefited by his obedience, had he firmly adhered to the Lord. Scripture repeatedly affirms the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's transgression to all his descendants, to the latest generations: "In Adam all die^m." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinnedⁿ." Experience and matter of fact attest the truth of this declaration. Every child of Adam, since the day he

^l Lam. iv. 1, 2.

^m 1 Cor. xv. 22.

ⁿ Rom. v. 12.

fell, has been conceived and born in sinⁿⁿ, is prone to evil, a subject of wrath, and exposed in a variety of forms to sorrow and death. Every person, as soon as he is capable of actual transgression, discovers a propensity to commit sin, and thus imitates the apostacy of Adam, in his own personal iniquity.

5. Some object, that the punishment greatly exceeded the offence; and others complain of the injustice of making Adam our federal head, and of vesting in him both our happiness and misery. As to the first objection, it may be replied, that whoever coolly reflects on the aggravating circumstances which marked the character of the first transgression, will see in it a crime of the foulest die, an offence of an almost unpardonable nature; containing in itself the seeds of all the wickedness which the human species have since conceived and perpetrated. It was a daring contempt of the Divine authority, a forgetfulness of God, and a base requital for the numerous favours which he had bestowed upon them: it was a foul act of treason against their lawful Sovereign, whom they deserted, to put themselves under the sceptre of the Prince of Darkness; and it argued jealousy, distrust, unbelief, and unjust thoughts of God, as if he wished to deprive them of something essential to their welfare.

Jehovah must have seen something so awfully criminal in this offence, as to determine him to punish it with a measure of severity commensurate to its great demerit. And, until we can ascertain the exact degree of guilt there was in that sin, it behoves us to acquiesce in the judgment which God has passed upon it.

6. With regard to the second objection, it may

ⁿⁿ Ps. li. 5. Eph. ii. 3.

be urged, that it does not become us to entertain the least doubt whether God acted agreeably to the most perfect justice in constituting Adam our representative. Nor can we, without great impiety, question his absolute right to do what he will with his creatures. His infinite wisdom and goodness preserve him from any suspicion of injustice in such a constitution. And they who are in the habit of reflecting against the equity of the appointment, will do well to consider with whom they are contending. As often as they murmur against the Lord, on this account, his word thus rebukes their presumption: "O man! who art thou that repliest against God?" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Besides, possessed of sufficient ability to stand to the covenant, Adam was, humanly speaking, more likely to hold fast his integrity, than to lose it. Who then was so fit to covenant for us, or to promote our spiritual interest, as He? But if He, comparatively perfect as he was, could not overcome temptation, can any one of us, his degenerate sons, flatter himself that he should have defeated more successfully the crafty assaults of the Devil? Our proneness to sin from our infancy, our constant aberrations from the path of known duty, and the ease with which Satan too frequently carries us captive at his will, confute such a notion; and remind us, that we are "set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright."

7. Furthermore, if Adam had performed the conditions of the covenant, he would have been confirmed in happiness, with his whole race, through all eternity. Now, if such had been the issue of his proba-

° Rom. ix. 20—24.

° Gen. xviii. 25.

tion, who would have ventured to impeach the justice of his federal representation, or have refused to share in the everlasting benefits which it would have procured? By parity of reasoning, now that the event has been adverse, ought we to complain of injustice; because we suffer, in common with himself, the bitter effects of his failure?

Instead, then, of giving way to impious censures against God, or rashly blaming the conduct of the first man, let us humbly deplore the condition to which we are reduced; but at the same time feel grateful to God for having raised us up a mighty Saviour, even Jesus his beloved Son, who is able to deliver us from the consequences of the Fall, and restore our lost felicity¹.

“ The Second Adam shall restore

The ruins of the first:

Hosanna to that Sovereign Power

That new creates our dust! WATTS.

¹ Luke i. 67—80.

LECTURE IX.

ON HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

Psalm li. 5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

THE corruption of our nature is a fact which no one, who is at all conversant with what is daily passing in his own breast, or with the general conduct of his fellow-creatures, can reasonably dispute: for it is a melancholy spectacle that forcibly addresses itself to our eyes, and with which we cannot be unacquainted; unless we are wilfully ignorant, or strangely incre-

dulous. "By one man, sin entered into the world." Adam, after his departure from God, begat sons in his own image, and endued with the same unholy affections as those which polluted his own soul^a. He could not communicate to Cain and Abel that holiness and integrity which he had lost; for "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one"^{aa}. If the fountain be defiled, can the stream which flows from it be pure? Thus every one, being himself "born in sin and shapen in iniquity," imparts the same corruption to his offspring; who, in turn, communicate it to their children; and, in this way, a sinful contagion is regularly transmitted from one generation to another. Hence every one becomes, from his birth, radically corrupt, in heart, affection, and practice; is devoted to sinful lusts and pleasures; and prefers evil to good, and darkness to light.

"Original sin is the fault or corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore, in every person born into the world; it deserveth God's wrath and damnation^b."

The root of the evil is to be traced to the heart, which is the source from whence the poison springs. It begins there, and then spreads its baleful influence throughout the whole man. As the blood flows immediately from the heart, and from thence circulates through the arteries and veins into every part of the animal system which is nourished thereby; so all the faculties and powers of the inward and outward man draw an evil contagion from their connexion with the

^a *Gen. v. 3.* ^{aa} *Job xiv. 4.* ^b IXth Art. of the Church of England.

heart, whence all our actions originate : “ for from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man^c. ”

This depravity is not a sudden or occasional act ; but is seen in the leading habits and dispositions of the soul.

1. The will is so affected by it, that it is become perverse, refractory, and disobedient. In defiance of the Divine threatenings, it inclines to evil as naturally as the sparks fly upward. Though God calls men, in the most affectionate manner, to the knowledge of himself, they refuse to hearken “ to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely.” As if bent upon their own destruction, they resolutely pursue the sinful objects which they idolize.

2. What the will thus proposes, the affections invariably prefer. Instead of choosing God as the best portion, and the pleasure which results from his service as the highest satisfaction, they approve and desire the very things which he forbids : lusting after sensual objects that perish in the using, they will not brook any restraint ; but must be gratified, though it be at the expense of offending God, who is the fountain of all blessedness.

3. The understanding is greatly obscured by the depravity of the heart : it is grossly ignorant of the nature and value of spiritual things, which unenlightened men esteem of no moment, in comparison with temporal good. Hence we are told, “ the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he

^c Mark vii. 21—24.

know them, because they are spiritually discerned^d." Men are sagacious enough to discover what will conduce to their worldly interest ; but are blind to the things which make for their everlasting peace^{dd}.

4. The conscience is that faculty of the mind which has, perhaps, suffered less by the Fall than the rest ; yet experience proves that it has been sensibly injured. It is but too easily bribed by the corrupt heart, to the repeated commission of sin ; till it becomes callous, and " seared as with an hot iron." Though aided, as it sometimes is, by the operations of the Holy Spirit, yet, for the most part, how backward is it to the faithful discharge of its duty ! How seldom does it check the sinner in his mad career of impiety ! Though it is the appointed guardian of the soul, it too often deserts its post, when lured by the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the Devil.

5. The body is contaminated by its union with the soul. Once the former concurred with the latter in acts of devotion to God ; but now it is a guilty auxiliary to the carnal mind, in its unwearied pursuit of forbidden gratifications. All the members of the body are become instruments of unrighteousness, and readily subserve the unholy desires and purposes of the depraved heart ; insomuch, that they promptly obey its determinations. Let but the heart hanker after any sinful pleasure, and the hands and feet are soon put in motion to procure it. And who, that knows himself, will not confess, that he is frequently deceived by trusting to the report of his animal senses, and led, through their solicitations, to do things which his better judgment condemns ? The eye can paint the most vicious objects in so attracting a light, as to stir up the appetite to desire them.

^d 1 Cor. ii. 14—16.

^{dd} Eph. iv. 17—20.

The ear readily listens to sounds which inflame the worst passions of the soul. Thus the different senses of the body, perverted by sin from their proper use, are become the caterers of vice, and the inlets of temptation. This brief view of the depravation of our nature may well fill us with emotions of the deepest regret: but when we further trace its sad effects upon the conduct, and consider what man once was, who can help exclaiming, "Name him, The glory is departed from Israel *."

We will now specify some of those bitter effects which this natural corruption produces. It visibly influences both the principles and practices of mankind.

6. One striking feature of our original depravity is apparent in the ingratitude with which our Maker is treated by us. He is continually showering his blessings in rich abundance upon our heads; yet we refuse to see and own the kind hand which supplies our wants. If Providence smiles upon our undertakings, we are more apt to ascribe the success attending them to our own skill and management, than to God, who "prospereth the works of our hands."

7. Coupled with this, is a total forgetfulness of the Lord who made us, notwithstanding he so constantly reminds us of his existence. The sun darts forth from his chamber every morning; the moon and stars reflect their light, and proclaim the glory of God; yet man is not awakened to admire and serve him. Though he whispers kindness in the refreshing breeze, and thunders in the storm; yet man refuses to listen to the sound. Each of his wonderful productions invites our praise, and courts our affections for its Divine author; yea, the whole creation joins in

* 1 Sam. iv. 21, 22.

magnifying the Lord of heaven, and in demanding our homage. But, alas ! so insensible is man, that he will not behold the Majesty of the Lord, nor attend to his gracious solicitations.

8. Another mark of this moral pravity is, the ignorance which the natural man discovers respecting God, his own state, and the distinct nature of good and evil. It is not to be greatly wondered at, that the Fall, having produced an estrangement of the heart from God, should render us blind to the purity, excellency, and spirituality of his nature. Hence that glorious Being, whom the Divine Records pronounce unalterably holy, just, and good, is strangely mistaken, and unknown. Men think him altogether such as themselves^f. Though he solemnly assures them that his justice obliges him to avenge unrepented guilt^g, yet they presumptuously confide in his uncovenanted mercy ; and thus go on in sin, under the fatal hope that he will overlook, and not punish their trespasses.

The same mistake prevails with respect to the worship due to God. Not aware that he requires sincerity and uprightness of mind in them that draw nigh unto him, and a cheerful obedience springing from proper motives, man, in an unrenowned state, contents himself with offering unto the Lord the hypocritical service of the lip, rather than the sacrifice of a contrite and devoted spirit. He is scrupulous enough in observing the form, but hates and denies " the power of godliness^h."

9. The opinion which fallen man entertains of his own condition, is an affecting proof of his debasement. He is not sensible of the wickedness of his heart, nor of his exposure to wrath on account of it.

^f Psalm l. 21.

^g ib. vii. 11—13.

^h 2 Tim. iii. 5.

Though God declares that the imaginations of the heart are evil, without any mixture of good to correct them^h; yet he is not aware of his disease, or the danger with which it threatens him. He goeth on frowardly in his ways, falsely persuading himself that he is on good terms with his Maker, and that his virtuous actions will outweigh and atone for his misdeeds. Hence he unwarrantably concludes, that if he does but abstain from those foul offences which affront and injure society, his partial observance of some precepts of religion will give him strong claims to the favour of God, whom he ignorantly regards as his debtor. Insensible of his spiritual malady^{hh}, he seeks not the grace of God to illuminate and sanctify his whole nature, nor does he ask pardon for the numerous sins which he has committed. And thus, if the Divine mercy interpose not, he drops into the gulph of perdition, a victim to a deceived heart which has turned him aside from the paths of righteousness and blissⁱ.

10. The wrong judgment formed of present and future things displays, in a most affecting light, the bitter consequences of our apostacy from God. Though his smile and eternal life are unquestionably the chief goodⁱⁱ, yea, the only blessing that can satisfy our souls; though Jehovah commands his rational creatures to seek his favour as their all-sufficient portion, and encourages them to hope for the attainment of it, in obedience to his will; yet so dark and corrupt is man, that he foolishly covets the world and its vanities in preference to God. To these he sacrifices his time and attention. In the morning he forms schemes of worldly gain and pleasure, which

^h Gen. vi. 5—7.

^{hh} Eph. iv. 18, 19.

ⁱ Isa. xlv. 20.

ⁱⁱ John xvii. 3.

are actively pursued throughout the day. His first and last thoughts are occupied about the idols of his affection; and every fresh opportunity of gratifying his inordinate thirst after them, affords new delight. On the other hand, he contrives to exclude God from possessing any share in his heart, or any place in his thoughts. The concerns of the soul never once engage his attention. Death, judgment, eternity, heaven, and hell, are kept out of sight. His mind is so engrossed with the cares and business and pleasures of this life, that he allows himself no time to inquire, Where am I going? What is likely to be the result of my present conduct? Shall I awake up to endless joy, or "to shame and everlasting contempt?"

11. The last, though by far the most awful feature of man's depravity, is his enmity to God. That a Being so benevolent, gracious, excellent, and lovely, should be an object of hatred, is truly astonishing; because he is possessed of every thing that ought to endear him to our minds. He is the Father of Lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. Can any creature, then, throughout the universe, be so base as to despise a God so absolutely holy and so exuberantly kind? Yes, the criminality of such conduct attaches to man, upon whom he daily lavishes his blessings with an unsparing hand, and still is forgotten and insulted. The righteousness of God, and the holy service which he enjoins, draw forth the hatred of the fallen heart, which is decidedly averse to them¹. Unregenerate men fly from the face of Jehovah, break his commands with impunity, and, engaging in open acts of treason against him, cast off his authority, and challenge him to execute his vengeful wrath upon their crimes. What the Lord approves, corrupt man dis-

¹ Dan. xii. 2.

¹ Rom. viii. 6, 7.

likes ; and that which is odious in his sight, depraved creatures intensely love. Hence his commandments, though far from being grievous, are a burden they cannot bear ; and this accursed hostility generates pride, independence, and all those daring acts of impiety, which render men more like Satan himself, than Beings originally formed after the Divine image.

At a view of such enormous guilt, we may well join in the complaint of the Prophet, who calls upon the creation to pass sentence upon it : " Hear, O heavens ! and give ear, O earth ! for the Lord hath spoken : I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me["]."

This degeneracy is coeval with our birth, and progressively increases with our days. Being conceived in sin, the seeds of vice take root in the heart before we can speak or act ; and growing with our growth, soon attain a fatal maturity. Before we arrive at years of discretion, the blossom and even the fruit of our corruption are discernible, in perverse tempers, ungovernable passions, impure desires, sinful imaginations, vicious conversation, and immoral practices. Neither the instruction of tutors, nor the authority of parents, nor the rebukes of conscience, nor shame and disgrace, nor the displeasure of God, nor the terrors of a judgment to come, can effectually restrain the violent propensities of a youthful breast. Hurried along by the blind impulse of depraved affections, the young choose evil rather than good, and pursue the deceitful pleasures of sin, while they neglect the beauties of holiness. Age strengthens and confirms, rather than corrects the depravity of the heart. Before we enter on plans of intercourse with a polluting world, the con-

["] Isa. i. 2—7.

science is more or less susceptible of right impressions: but as men advance in years, their minds gradually acquire a lamentable degree of hardness, which prepares them to resist all the monitions of conscience, the denunciations of Divine wrath, and the kindly influences of the Holy Spirit; who, slighted and provoked by their impenitence, abandons them: and thus becoming "dead in trespasses and sins," they perish through obstinacy and unbelief.

13. This doctrine is very offensive to the natural pride of "the carnal mind, which is enmity against God." But it is nevertheless undeniably true, as will appear from the judgment which the Almighty forms concerning the actual state of man, in every age, climate, and country, throughout the habitable globe. His testimony should be received without distrust; because, as a God of truth, he can have no pleasure in libellously degrading his own creatures. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually^m." "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying soresⁿ." "There is none righteous, no not one^o." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God^p." "Wherein, in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom, also, we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;

^m Gen. vi. 5—7. viii. 21.

ⁿ Psalm xiv. Rom. iii. 10—19.

^p Isa. i. 5, 6.

^p Rom. iii. 23.

and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others⁹."

14. History concurs in attesting the truth of this mournful representation; a large portion of which is occupied in detailing the murders, violence, oppression, injustice, villainy, and corruption of the human species. Now and then the picture presents a few light and agreeable tints; but how soon is this pleasing view obscured, by a cloud of dark shades and colours, which disfigure the portrait, and manifestly exhibit its leading features!

15. If, however, neither the evidence of our senses, nor the declarations of God, nor observations upon the conduct of others, can convince us; let an appeal be finally made to our own experience. You need look no further than your own bosoms, for a confirmation of man's universal depravity. Trace, then, your steps from infancy to youth; and, thenceforward, through the remaining periods of a frail existence; and if you honestly compare what has passed in your hearts, and has been acted in your general deportment, with the demands of God's law, a conviction of the fact must immediately follow. Before example, custom, or education, could have had a powerful influence over your minds, "you went astray from God, like lost sheep," yielding yourselves to the guidance of perverse inclinations. The love of the world, and its fading toys, predominated in your breasts at an early age. In your juvenile years, your hearts were intensely set upon present things; your senses and passions were clamorous for forbidden gratifications; you had no serious desire to please God; and you made no scruple of acting contrary to his will. Though you sometimes offered formal peti-

⁹ Eph. ii. 2, 3.

tions to Heaven ; yet you did not fervently, and from your inmost souls, pray for Divine grace to recover you to a state of righteousness. Examination, of the heart was entirely neglected, while your minds were filled only with schemes and prospects about your future advancement in life.

And if you fairly review your actions from that time to this very moment, what ingratitude, forgetfulness of God, loud murmurs against his providence, and impatience under his fatherly visitations ! What avowed and secret contempt of his name and ways, and what numberless acts of wickedness, have been observable in your lives, and have called for the most exemplary punishment of Heaven ! Now, if our hearts were not naturally evil, we should act in a widely-different manner towards God. Had we right ideas of our obligations to him, then we should adore his perfections, and seek his face, as soon as we are capable of rendering him service.

16. Since the proofs of the doctrine of original sin rest upon such undoubted authority, it will be presumptuous to deny it. On the contrary, it becomes us to read the Scriptures with a teachable spirit; that, comparing their affirmations, on the humiliating subject, with our own experience, we may get a thorough acquaintance with the defilement of our nature. Indeed, a hearty belief of our depravity, and the peril to which it exposes us, is necessary to salvation. The maxim of Christ holds invariably good in spiritual, as well as natural diseases : " They that be whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick." Until we are made sensible that our unholy state absolutely unfits us for intercourse with the blessed God, either here or

in the life to come, we shall never feel constrained to cry, "What must we do to be saved?" Flattering ourselves that our souls are not so depraved as the Bible represents them, we shall either not seek their renovation, or else we shall imagine that by our own wisdom and strength we can reform them when we please. Examine yourselves: take an exact survey of your ruined condition; and let not self-deception blind your eyes. By this means, you will make a discovery of the secret abominations which lurk within you: and though such a knowledge of your guilt will at first excite painful sensations, it will nevertheless be productive, in the end, of real advantage: it will teach you the necessity of regeneration; and force you to cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me!"

But dost thou, Reader, "know the plague of thine own heart?" hast thou felt its dire effects in alienating thy affections from God? Then fly to Christ, whose atoning blood is a sovereign remedy for thy disease. It will ease thy conscience, and give thee peace: it will wash out the foulest stains of guilt which thou hast contracted. His grace can renew and purify your heart. His Spirit can alter the current of your depraved affections, and give them a right bias towards the service of God; and thus, being enabled to honour him here, by a devoted life, he will call you hereafter to the full enjoyment of himself for evermore.

* Psalm li. 10.

LECTURE X.

ON THE HEINOUSNESS AND MALIGNITY OF SIN.

Rom. vii. 13. *That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.*

THE existence and dire effects of sin are so obvious, as not to require any arguments to prove them. All the moral evils which are extant in the world may be traced to sin, as their common source.

St. Paul seems to have been at a loss for an epithet, wherewith he might fix a suitable brand on the odious nature of sin, when he styles it "exceeding sinful^a." St. John, indeed, furnishes us with a definition of it, which will enable us to form some faint conceptions of its enormity: "Sin," says he, "is the transgression of the law^b." Now the precepts of God's law demand, from every individual, a perfect obedience. The Divine law takes cognizance of, and condemns, the impure thought, the vicious desire, and the wandering heart and affection, as well as the more open and flagrant acts of immorality. If, then, we contrast sin with the unsullied purity of the moral law, it will plainly appear to be a violation of its requirements, and, consequently, an offence directed against the Throne and Majesty of Heaven. Viewed in this proper light, it will be impossible for a serious and reflecting mind to regard sin as a mere trifle. And yet, how many are there, who can allow themselves in the commission of it without any hesitation or remorse! Trusting, it is to be feared, to the uncovenanted mercy of God, they flatter themselves that all will be well at last, and that God will not exact punishment for what they term venial faults.

^a Rom. vii. 13.

^b 1 John iii. 4.

Such persons are manifestly unacquainted with the revealed character of God : they do not consider, that although his mercy is exuberantly great, yet he cannot, consistently with his other perfections, suffer iniquity to go unpunished. If men live and die in guilt and impenitence, the justice of God is sure to overtake and punish them at last. “The Lord alloweth the righteous; but the ungodly, and him that delighteth in wickedness, doth his soul abhor. Upon the ungodly he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, storm and tempest; this shall be their portion to drink.”

Now, surely, the Judge of all the Earth would never thus visit iniquity, unless there was something in it peculiarly heinous and abominable. The fact is, sin is an infinite evil, because it is committed against an Infinite Being; and therefore we should not feel surprised, if God deems it worthy of endless punishment; and declares, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die^d,” and “The wages of sin is death.”

The heart is the fountain of action, from whence all our sins, both of principle and practice, flow. The inward and secret iniquities of our hearts, though they do not manifest their malignity by action, are, nevertheless, as criminal, in the eye of Divine Justice, as the more open and avowed acts of transgression.

With a view to shew the guilt of sin, let us speak a little concerning the moral evils which it has occasioned in the world.

1. It is to sin we must ascribe all those diseases and pains which afflict our bodies; and that anguish and grief which rankle in our bosoms; with all that dire train of miseries to which human-nature is subject. Sorrow, from whatever quarter it arises,

^c Ps. xi. 6, 7. Prayer-Book Translation.

^d Ezek. xviii. 4.

^e Rom. vi. 23.

as well as poverty and vexation, originally come from the same source. The world is full of disorder, and trouble, and commotions; which had no existence, till sin deluged it with evils.

2. If we wish to survey the more immediate effects of sin, let us walk to our prisons, and see our fellow-creatures loaded with chains, anxiously awaiting the hour of trial; when the sentence passed on their crimes will probably consign many of them to an ignominious death. Their untimely fate is the fruit of transgression.

3. Go to our infirmaries and hospitals, and witness the agonies, and hear the groans which proceed from those unhappy persons who are labouring under inveterate and incurable maladies. Some of the patients confined within their wards are sick; others are smitten by the touch of Death; and some are already dead, and their spirits have fled either to abodes of bliss or wretchedness.

4. If we walk into our churchyards, the common receptacles for the deceased, we are at once reminded of the bitter consequences of sin. There we see young and old, the infant and its mother, the son and his father, laid prostrate by the hand of Death. Some of them died in old age; but others were cut off in the vigour of life, at a time when they were likely to have lived to an advanced age.

5. Again: Let us go from house to house, and see if we cannot trace evident marks of the ravages which sin has made. Both in the stately mansion and in the humble cottage, Death, sickness, and trouble, reign with uncontrolled sway. None are exempted from sharing in these evils; because every one of us, being a sinner, is doomed by the justice of God to suffering and mortality. "By one man sin

entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned^f."

6. Further: Mark the effects of transgression on the minds of the human species. It is here that its mischiefs are most to be deplored. Sin has robbed us of the lovely image of God our Maker: it has totally perverted all the faculties of our souls, and prostituted them to the basest purposes; so that we are utterly disqualified for rendering the obedience we owe to God, without his grace assisting, and enabling us to serve him. The understanding, the will, the affections, and the conscience, have been so entirely impaired by sin, that they cannot discharge their proper functions, until they are rectified by the grace of the Holy Spirit. In support of this statement, we may cite the words of the Tenth Article: "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will."

7. Contemplate the enormous evil of sin, from those terrible displays of vengeance which God has made against it. Consider the awful fate of the old world, which was destroyed for its iniquities, by a general deluge; from which only Noah, and seven other persons, escaped^g. Bear in mind the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Cities of the Plain, "which are set forth for an example to all succeeding ages, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"^h. The judgments inflicted on the Jews, who were once

^f Rom. v. 12.

^g 2 Pet. ii. 4—7.

^h Jude, ver. 7.

the highly-favoured people of God, afford a striking comment on the guilt of transgression. Because they rebelled against the Lord; rejected, and at last crucified, the Messiah; God permitted the Romans to destroy their city, Jerusalem; in the siege and capture of which, about twelve hundred thousand of the people perished. Afterwards, they were scattered abroad throughout the face of the earth, and became a bye-word and reproach amongst the Heathen. To this day, they live dispersed throughout the habitable globe; existing as a distinct people, and yet living in subjection to the laws of those kingdoms in which they reside. We see them a persecuted people; in-somuch that the very name of Jew, in the common acceptation of the term, is used as a word expressive of reproach and contempt.—Now, if God has thus punished a whole nation on account of its wickedness, let not impenitent transgressors flatter themselves with impunity, because the judgments of God are not speedily executed against them: for it is nothing but his unexampled forbearance that keeps off the impending blow. “O consider this, ye that forget God! lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you^b.”

8. We may see the malignity of sin portrayed, in awful colours, in the exquisite tortures of the damned. See “the smoke of their torment, which ascendeth up for ever and ever!” Hear the doleful lamentations which fill the infernal regions with horror! And then ask, if sin, which is the procuring cause of such misery, be not an evil of the most aggravated nature.

9. Review the sufferings of the Son of God. How agonizing, how pungent, his pain and sorrow on the cross! There He was insulted by the spectators,

^b Psalm l. 22.

buffeted by evil spirits, and deserted by his Father. The bitter sufferings of Jesus more forcibly preach the heinousness and desert of sin, than all the torments experienced by the damned in hell;—for it was not possible for God to make a louder protest against iniquity, than that which he made by the blood and groans and death of the benevolent Jesus!

10. Sin is most ruinous in its consequences; because it totally unfits a man for the enjoyment of heaven; which a person living in the allowed practice of iniquity cannot relish. The reason is plain: heaven is a holy and spiritual place; and, consequently, all who possess the inheritance of the saints in light must be meetened for it by purity of heart. “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they that are written in the Lamb’s book of life¹.”

11. If sin, then, be an evil of such magnitude, it ought to be an object of universal dread and detestation. Every one should fly from its approach, as they would from the face of a serpent. This, however, is not the case: there always have been, and now are, many who make light of it; as if it were incapable of doing them any injury. These persons Solomon stigmatizes with the epithet of “fools, who make a mock of sin².” Let us endeavour to escape the punishment of such men, by treating sin as it deserves. Never give it the least sanction, by a smile, or any other token of approbation. Do not encourage sin by conniving at it in others; for this would be to make yourselves partakers of their guilt. Neither endeavour to palliate iniquity, by giving it soft names, with a view to do away its criminality, if

¹ Rev. xxi. 27. ² Prov. xiv. 9.

not its existence. Let not the blackest vices be clothed with specious names, to cover their native deformity; but strip off the false disguises which are put on them, in order that they may appear in their true colours.

12. Consider sin as the most serious evil. When you reflect on the mischiefs it has done to the human kind, in despoiling them of their original righteousness, in darkening and corrupting their minds, in injuring their bodies, and in filling the world with misery that touches all our souls, surely you cannot but regard it as the most accursed thing which could visit our race!

13. Let this just view of iniquity lead us to deplore it. Can we refrain from shedding tears, when we see to what a degraded state sin has reduced mankind? Can we behold so many millions of intelligent creatures suffering under the curse of sin, unmoved, and without uttering the wish, "that God's ways may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations"? But, as sinners, who have broken the Divine law, ought we not to humble ourselves before His footstool, for our personal transgressions; confessing, that the least of our trespasses deserves eternal death, and that it is of the Lord's mercy we have been spared to this moment? A true and sincere repentance, consisting in confession of our sins, and sorrow on account of them, is the best proof we can give of a right knowledge and feeling of the demerit of sin. Until we thus repent of iniquity, and the native depravity of our hearts, we are in a state of condemnation, and, of course, are liable, every moment, to feel the severity of Divine justice. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish^{*}."

^{*} Luke xiii. 3.

14. Next to contrition, we must apply the remedy, which God, in his mercy, has appointed for sin. After we feel ashamed of our transgressions, let us remember that their pollution must be cleansed by the blood and sacrifice of Christ; for though sorrow for sin is, when genuine, pleasing to God, yet it can never wash away the guilt of sin, or atone for the smallest offence. God pardons the penitent soul freely, fully, everlastingly—not for the sake of his repentance, but Christ's all-sufficient satisfaction and merits¹. Seek, then, by faith in Jesus, to mortify sin in all its actings on your souls. A beholding of Him, fixed on the cross as an atonement for transgression, is the only remedy for the corruption of the heart, and for sanctifying it to the service of God and His righteous cause^m.

Do we desire to avoid sin in all its appearances? Is it our wish “to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord?” Come, then, daily to the Cross of Christ, to arm yourselves with motives, which cannot fail, in proportion as you are influenced by them, to induce you to “deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to make you live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present worldⁿ.”

¹ Isa. xlii. 21. liii. 11, 12. ^m Gal. vi. 14. ⁿ Tit. ii. 12, 13.

LECTURE XI.

ON THE MISERABLE CONDITION OF MAN, AS A SINNER BY
NATURE AND PRACTICE.

Ephesians ii. 3. *And were by nature the Children of wrath,
even as others.*

THE view which has been taken of human depravity,

is truly affecting. We have seen, that the soul, which was once a faint representation of the Deity himself, is become the deformed abode of every species of wickedness: so that, like a once-magnificent palace now lying in ruins, there are only some weak traces left, by which we may form an opinion of its pristine grandeur.

Painful, however, as it is to contemplate the degraded condition of mankind, yet the fearful consequences attached thereto render it still more deplorable. Guilt and sorrow, by the decree of God, are inseparably connected. Where sin reigns, the bosom must be an entire stranger to peace and satisfaction. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked^a". The subject of man's misery, as a sinner, is so copious, that, in the short limits of a lecture, we can only touch upon its most prominent features. We shall range our remarks under four heads; and exhibit it, as a state of bondage, condemnation, present-suffering, and expectation of future wrath.

1. It is a state of bondage to the Law of God. The law exacts a perfect obedience; and, in case of failure, inflicts its dreadful penalty: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them^b." Sinful man is hourly transgressing this law, both in its letter and spirit. He dislikes its precepts, as if they were unreasonably strict, and intended to deprive him of real pleasure. Hence he makes no scruple in disobeying the commands of God. The law, therefore, after convicting sinners of innumerable offences, passes its fearful sentence upon them;

^a Isa. lviii, 20, 21.

^b Gal. iii, 10.

which is nothing less than the wrath of God both here and hereafter: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels^c." Under this solemn curse of the violated law, every person in an unregenerate state remains, till, repenting of his numerous sins against God, he flies for refuge to the Saviour, who is both able and willing to grant him deliverance. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us^d." "Christ is the end (or fulfilment) of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth^e." With what earnestness, then, should men seek to be released from the heavy yoke of the law, by obeying the compassionate exhortation of our crucified Lord—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest^f."

2. Man is in bondage under sin. God made us free and upright. The exercise of liberty by our first parents consisted in an unconstrained choice of good, and an aversion to evil. This holy freedom, as we have already seen, was soon exchanged for a slavish subjection to depraved inclinations: the posterity of Adam, partaking of the same corruption, are, as he was, under the dominion of sin: their powers, both of body and mind, are enslaved by it. The soul of man, under every advantage of education, savours not the things that are of God, but those which are earthly, and suited to its vicious taste: "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh^g:" it constantly tends towards, and always centres in, fleshly objects.

The body shares in this degrading thralldom: it is "tied and bound with the chain of sin." It unites with the soul in committing iniquity, with a shame-

^c Mat. xxv. 41.

^d Gal. iii. 13.

^e Rom. x. 4.

^f Mat. xi. 28.

^g John iii. 6.

less alacrity. How sincerely, therefore, should each convinced sinner pray, that God, through "the pitifulness of his great mercy, would loose him, for the honour of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Advocate^b!"

3. The natural man is under bondage to Satan. The agency of Satan on the human mind is denied by many, who pride themselves on the superiority of their intellect, and affect to despise those truths which the generality of men believe as "the true sayings of God." As the Evil Spirit influences the heart in various ways, the pride, disdain, and contempt, with which infidels treat the sacred doctrines of religion, afford as striking proofs of that influence on themselves, as the most glaring acts of wickedness do on those who commit them. "Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture?" It ascribes the impiety of men to the agency of Satan, acting on the depravity of their hearts: "Wherein, in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedienceⁱ." Yea, it furthermore maintains that every impenitent sinner is in bondage to him: "That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, who are taken captive at his willⁱⁱ."

In the first instance, men freely choose the vassalage of Satan: forsaking, without provocation, the delightful service of God, they willingly enlist under the banners of the deadly foe. They accept of him as their leader, and cheerfully submit to his hateful yoke; and thus concur in all his rebellious projects against the Lord of Glory. Of each of his slaves, Christ says, "Ye are of your father the Devil, and

^b Evening Prayer.

ⁱ Eph. ii. 2, 3.

ⁱⁱ 2 Tim. xi. 26.

the lusts of your father ye will do^k." But when once they have consented to put themselves under his authority, he rules over them, like a merciless despot, with a cruel rigour. Even the iron bondage of the Israelites in Egypt, which made death preferable to life, was comparatively easy to the tyranny and oppression which the Wicked-one exercises over his subjects. He constrains them to activity in the promotion of his diabolical cause; and engages them daily in fresh acts of sin, in order to confirm their enmity to God, and ensure their perdition. Through the medium of temptations, adapted to gratify "the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," he rivets on the fetters which more closely bind them to his interests.

That vast multitudes pay a voluntary homage to Satan, may be seen, not only from the tenor of men's lives^l, but from the alarming declaration of the Apostle: "The whole world (except real believers) lieth in wickedness^m," or under the dominion of the Wicked-one.

4. Sinners are under bondage to the fear of death. Many, urged by a desire of transmitting their names with honour to posterity, will shew an heroic contempt of death, in the field of battle, or in prosecuting an important enterprise. Most men, however, dread the ordinary approach of death, which even the courageous are averse to meditate on. It may be granted, there is something in the dissolution of our mortal frame that may momentarily affect the mind, even of the righteous, who possess a well-founded hope "of the resurrection unto eternal life:" yet this must not be confounded with those fearful forebodings of death, which harass and overwhelm the

^l John viii. 44. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. ^m 1 John iii. 6—11. ⁿ ib. v. 19.

impenitent. They are unable to contemplate the taking down of their earthly tabernacle, without shrinking back from the thought of Death. The ghastly visage of the king of terrors affrights them; and they retire from the appalling sight with a consternation that utterly unnerves their whole frame. It is not difficult to find out the cause which renders death an object of such alarm. The ungodly dread it; first, because it deprives them of life and all its enjoyments, in which their happiness is altogether made up; and, secondly, because of the upbraidings of conscience, and a secret fear, lest God should punish their sins as they deserve. Thus "the sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law^m." This is declared to be a most wretched thralldom, from which the Son of God rescues his believing peopleⁿ.

How pitiable, in this view of the subject, is fallen man! The slave of sin and Satan, and terrified at the prospect of death, his case excites our compassion. Whilst he, in too many instances, hugs the fatal chains which oppress him, and glories in them as the ensigns of liberty, angels deplore his guilt, as a state of captivity, that (without the mercy of God) must end in eternal sorrowⁿⁿ!

5. Sinful man is also under condemnation. That holy Law, which sinners hourly break in word and deed, requires satisfaction for the injury it thus sustains. "Pay me that thou owest, or away to prison!" is the menace which it holds out to every transgressor. Nor will it abate a single iota of its demands, nor liberate its debtors, till all its claims are discharged. But what can guilty man do? Insolvent, and without any hope of retrieving his ruined circumstances, he can neither satisfy the law of God in future, nor repair

^m 1 Cor. xv. 56.

ⁿ Heb. ii. 14, 15.

ⁿⁿ Isai. l. 11.

the past dishonour which he has offered to its righteous precepts. As the Law cannot tolerate the violation of itself, it takes its course, and pronounces condemnation upon every one that doeth evil^o.

The execution of the sentence is mercifully suspended to "the hour of death and the day of judgment." This short respite should not embolden the ungodly in the further commission of sin, lest they should thereby aggravate their punishment. It ought, as it is designed to do, to lead them to sincere repentance, that they may avert the wrath which the justice of God has kindled against them. So long as life is prolonged, there is some hope that even the most hardened offenders may relent, and accept the forgiveness which is tendered to them^p. But, if this grace is despised, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries^q." "Now, therefore, O sinner, is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation^r." "God waiteth to be gracious^s." Earnestly sue for his mercy, that the sentence which is gone forth against thy crimes may be reversed, and exchanged, for a bright hope of eternal life.

6. Man, as a sinner, suffers greatly in this life. The introduction of sin brought with it a train of evils, to which we are subject from the cradle to the grave. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now^t." Irrational animals are doomed, by the will of God, to partake, with man, of the mischiefs occasioned by transgression. Yet he, as the sole offender, is deservedly the principal sufferer. Nothing which possesses life is liable to such an end-

^o Rom. iii. 19, 20.

^p Isa. lv. 6, 7.

^q Heb. x. 26, 27.

^r 2 Cor. vi. 2.

^s Isa. xxx. 18.

^t Rom. viii. 22.

less variety of miseries as man. Though so much exalted above the brute creation, he is nevertheless subject to infirmities, wants, and distress, which are unknown to them. Every thing proclaims aloud the abject condition to which he is reduced by the Fall: the infirm and disordered state of his mind forcibly illustrates this. What an awful eclipse have his mental powers experienced! How ignorant is he with respect to those heavenly things which relate to his eternal welfare! What rooted dislike does he manifest to the requisitions of God's Word! What a stranger does he appear to be to the motions of his own heart! The diseases which attack his body are keenly felt; but, oh! how unconscious is he of the fatal complaints that defile and ruin his soul! Though he has lost the original righteousness of his nature, and is filled with unruly affections and wicked thoughts, he is as insensible of the nature of this spiritual malady, as a corpse is of pain. These things demonstrate that an unregenerate man is "dead in trespasses and sins." If it were otherwise, would he be ignorant, to such a degree as he is, of that loss of heavenly life and happiness which he has sustained by the Fall?

There are, however, sorrows peculiar to this state, which the mind cannot but sensibly feel. The cause which induces them is unknown to the generality; but the effects are too visible to be denied. The mind is exposed to pain and grief from its own innate depravity, as well as from the connection which it maintains with the body. The exercise of corrupt passions produces much bitterness. Pride, discontent, enmity, anger, malice, and cruelty, with all their dire attendants, cannot exist without occasioning some degree of smart to the conscience; the stings

of which are not unfrequently insupportable. Thus, harassed at seasons with a poignant sense of guilt, though he tries to stifle it, man, as a sinner, is deplorably wretched.

The numerous distempers which affect the body are more conspicuous, and, on that account, are more generally lamented, than those which assault the soul. "Man is born to trouble:" so that if you trace his path through life, from infancy to old age, it presents a continued scene of affliction, disease, and suffering. If, through the kindness of Providence, he escapes unhurt from the violence of one disorder, he is soon liable to be visited with another, which may prove fatal. Fixed in a state where the natural elements are hostile to us, and where, from various causes, the arrows of death in different forms are flying around us, we are encompassed with manifold dangers.

Now sin is the fountain which has emitted these moral and natural evils. Its ravages in this way have been as extensive as the destruction was of the first-born in Egypt^a.

"Sin has turned the whole universe into a lazaretto. Every house is an infirmary, whose wards are filled with patients; some dragging out a miserable existence from an incurable malady; others, in different apartments, experiencing a sudden dissolution from apoplexy, or some fatal disease which numbers them with the dead; whilst others, gradually recovering from a long illness, are creeping about, following the directions of the physician, anxiously marking the symptoms of their complaints, alternately cheered by hope or depressed by fear, and wishfully sighing for the time, when, their health being restored, they

^a Ex. xii. 29, 30.

may leave the sick chamber, to resume their accustomed occupations, or mingle in the pleasurable scenes of life."

If there are a few who seem to pass through this vale of tears without sharing in these bodily sufferings, they are, in one sense, exceptions to the maxim, "Man is born to trouble:" yet not in another; for there are none of the human species who are exempted from the sorrows necessarily attendant on a state which sin hath cursed. All, in their intercourse with the world, find it a source of disappointment, vexation, and grief. All are forced to drink of the bitter cup, which sin has mixed, and continually holds to their lips. Some, it is true, bear up under the pressure of sorrow with more fortitude than others: yet even they, who pretend to despise the ills of life, have occasional pangs of grief, which afford clear proofs that they participate in the general misery which accompanies our fallen state.

7. Sinners are liable to future wrath. Did their sufferings terminate here, it would be some alleviation of their misery. But the damning power of unpardoned sin is not destroyed by death. It prepares endless punishment for the impenitent, in the next world. Even now they are sometimes tormented with a fearful anticipation of the wrath to come; but hereafter they must assuredly realize all the curses which God has denounced against them. That eternal torments await them in a future state, is certain from the Divine Word: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God^u;"—"where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched^x." "When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty

^u Psalm ix. 17.

^x Mark ix. 48.

angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power^{xx}."

What, then, can be more dreadful than the state in which man is plunged by his departure from the Living God? No imagination can fully conceive, no tongue can adequately express, its awful nature. Before we can know the full extent of the evil, we must explore the regions of the damned; hear the groans and cries and lamentations of the unhappy spirits confined therein^y; and see those vials of Divine wrath which are poured upon them without measure, and which occasion the smoke of their torment to ascend up before God for ever and ever^z.

The view we have taken of this melancholy subject, from the Bible and experience, is sufficiently appalling to the serious mind. Under the most grievous bondage to sin, Satan, the violated Law, and to Death; lying under a sentence of condemnation, which may be put in execution in a few moments; afflicted, as it regards their souls, with gross darkness; and visited, as to their bodies, with pain, disease, poverty, want, and a train of evils which they cannot avoid: add to this accumulation of woe, harassed with guilty fears, and with a dread of the approaching judgment, unpardoned sinners are now in a most deplorable condition, which, without conversion, must have a tragical issue.

Oh that all, who are in the woeful state which has been described, may ponder these things in their hearts; till, conscious of the misery in which sin has already involved them, and the vengeance to which

^{xx} 2 Thess. i. 7—10.

^y Matt. xxx. 30.

^z Rev. xiv. 10, 11.

it hereafter exposes them, they may feel the necessity of seeking that grace, mercy, and forgiveness, which can absolve their offences, reconcile them to God, transform them into Children of Light, give them a title to, and the possession of endless life and happiness !

Pray fervently, O sinners ! that God would liberate you from the disgraceful bondage of iniquity, and bring you into the glorious liberty of his Children²² : then your present sorrow will be turned into joy ; and, on the hour of your arrival in heaven, " God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes."

²² Rom. viii. 21.

LECTURE XII.

ON THE NATURE AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE MORAL LAW, AND THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF BEING JUSTIFIED BY IT.

Rom. iii. 12. *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight ; for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

THE precepts enjoined by the Law of God bespeak at once their origin and excellence^a. Were they generally complied with, vice would cease to produce its deadly fruits, and every species of virtue would flourish and abound.

The moral law is to be considered as a transcript of God's holiness and perfections. It shews us what He is ; and what we should endeavour to be, if we feel any desire to please him, or to attain his blessing. All the grand outlines of the law were originally impressed on man's heart ; and some indistinct traces of it are still to be found in all, however they

^a Psalm xix.

may have been weakened by the Fall. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another^b."

Every one is bound to honour the law of his Creator; and is placed under its cognizance, as a covenant of works, whose conditions must be perfectly fulfilled by those who expect to be justified by their own righteousness^c. It is true, the Law was first delivered to the Israelites; yet its injunctions were not restricted to THEM, but were designed to be equally binding on ALL; as is manifest, from its enjoining duties, which no time, or place, or circumstance, can release us from. To love God and their Neighbour, is a duty that will be incumbent on men, as accountable creatures, as long as the world endures.

The form of the precepts, in each of which the singular number is used, is intended to remind us, that they respect each person singly, and all men collectively. Indeed, even believers in Christ, who, through grace, "are dead to the law" as a system of life, and are freed from its penal curse, are not exempted from an obligation to regard it as a complete rule of life and manners^d. Gratitude to Jesus, for his great love in answering the demands of the law in their behalf, should constrain them to regulate their lives by its holy dictates^{dd}. And, certainly, the nearer any one approaches in spirit and practice to this model of perfection, the more will he resemble God, and the greater will be the degree of his fitness for the enjoy-

^b Rom. ii. 14, 15.

^c Gal. iii. 10—12.

^d 1 Cor. ix. 21, *vinol*

^{dd} 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

ment of the heavenly inheritance. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." And what is righteousness, but a conformity to the Divine law^c.

The great perfection of the law appears from the extent of the duties which it prescribes. The object of the law is, to secure the honour due to God, to consecrate all the powers of man to His service, to govern the heart, and describe the beauty of righteousness. The Commandments have an extensive meaning; and the exposition given of some of them by Christ himself, proves that every one of them reaches the intents and secret motions of the heart.

"The First commandment requires supreme and unrivalled love for God; that sensual pleasure, honour, riches, and every earthly comfort, compared with Him, should be vile in our eyes. The Second obliges us to take heed that we conceive of God as he has revealed his own nature, neither adding to, nor diminishing any thing therefrom; that we worship before him secretly, and in the congregation, according to the rule he hath himself appointed; offering to him spiritual prayers, praises, and thanksgivings; keeping at a distance from every appearance of idolatry^c. The Third requires us to be mindful, at all times, of God's Majesty; conscientiously avoiding, in our conversation and thoughts, every thing savouring of irreverence towards him; that we observe faithfully the religious profession we make before him; and with the form of godliness join the power. The Fourth obliges us to lay aside every worldly occupation on the Lord's day; that the worth of the soul, and things of a spiritual nature, may take up our thoughts, and more strongly affect our minds. The Fifth requires us, as soon as we can understand our

^c 1 John iii. 4.

^c John iv. 24. Deut. x. 20.

duty, to pay a cheerful obedience to our parents ; testifying the sense we have of our debt to them, under God, for the preservation of our life, for much tenderness and care over us in the helpless state of childhood, and numberless benefits besides. The Sixth commandment not only restrains our hands from murderous violence, but condemns every degree of wrath, hatred, or want of love in the heart, towards men. The Seventh not only condemns the whoremonger and the adulterer ; but even the looking upon the countenance of a person with impure thoughts, as the adultery of the heart^f. The Eighth is a barrier against every injurious encroachment which self-love would lead us to make upon our neighbour's property or rights : it forbids every species of fraud, however prevalent, or palliated by plausible excuses. The Ninth exacts from us an inviolable regard to truth, and the character of our fellow-creatures ; a victory over the tongue, "that world of iniquity"—the tongue, so impatient of restraint from the law of kindness. The Tenth condemns every covetous wish, all inordinate love to the things of the world, and every degree of discontent at our appointed station."

That perfect conformity to the will of God, which the law requires, extends to the thoughts, words, and actions.

1. The law being spiritual in its nature, has respect to the thoughts of men, as may be seen from the exposition given of it in St. Matthew^g. The heart and all its secret movements are open to its notice. Human laws cannot sit in judgment on the motives of an offender, except as they imperfectly shew themselves in the overt act, which they principally regard, and punish, according to the malignity of its appearance.

^f Matt. v. 28.

^g ib. c. v.

The Divine law, however, is more perfect ; it looks inward, with a view to examine the state of the mind. It expects purity of design, sincere intentions, and upright motives, as well as perfect obedience to God, throughout our whole lives, before it can justify us. Whilst it demands truth, justice, and goodness without, it does not allow us to indulge any guile within. " The Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart^a." Thus we may learn, that our actions, to be right and praiseworthy in the sight of God, must not only have a beneficial tendency and end, but also spring from good motives ; otherwise, though they may appear ever so brilliant in the eyes of men, they will be defective, and expose us to punishment.

Moreover, there are many sins which are overlooked by the laws of men, either because they are not deemed punishable, or considered detrimental to society. Hence they provide no punishment for pride, ingratitude, passion, ungovernable anger, malice, and such like offences ; except as they lead men to commit outrageous acts against the peace and welfare of the community. Here, again, the perfection of God's holy law is very conspicuous. The least, as well as the greatest departure from righteousness, it declares to be sinful. Many things which men think harmless, and free from guilt, the Divine law pronounces to be foul affronts offered to God. It condemns pride, as the source of all evil : malicious thoughts, and plans of revenge, are reproved by it with severity ; and it dissuades us from wrath and causeless anger, as tending to endanger our everlasting welfare^b. Thus we perceive depraved imaginations, unholy desires, wandering affections, and

^a 1. Sam. xvi 7.

^b Mat. v. 22.

wrong tempers, are as much sins, in the estimation of God, as those more outward and flagrant offences, to which, in general, a greater degree of criminality is attached.

2. The law of God pays a strict attention to our words ; because they express the thoughts and intentions of the mind. The faculty of speech was given us, that we might praise God, and hold intercourse with one another. Therefore, indecent, lascivious expressions, which excite unchaste ideas, are forbidden by the Commandments of the Lord, which direct us to "let our speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that we may know how we ought to answer every man¹." Lies, falsehood, and prevarication, are gross abuses of speech, censured in every part of the Divine Word. In like manner, words of a slanderous import, that tend to defame the reputation of others ; together with every idle, useless, or improper expression ; are prohibited by the law, which requires us to use our words with discretion.

3. Our actions come directly under the notice of the law. Nothing, however trivial, escapes its cognizance : it is so rigid and unbending in its demands, that it makes no allowance for what are called sins of infirmity, harmless offences, venial faults, and constitutional failings. It condemns every act, however applauded by men, which does not come up to its high standard. It censures an unprofitable life, and the non-improvement of the several talents committed to our trust². In fact, it will not connive at sin in any form, but forbids, on pain of God's displeasure, every thing which is opposed to righteousness, justice, goodness, and truth. So absolutely perfect is the obedience required by the law of God, that it

¹ Col. iv. 6.

² Mat. xxv. 30.

does not permit a man to balance what he may deem his GOOD deeds, against his BAD ones; but treats him as a delinquent for a single crime. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all^k;" he has thereby sinned against the authority of the Divine Lawgiver, as clearly as if he had broken the whole law. For, as a chain is marred, if but one of its links is broken; so the whole law is insulted by even a single breach of its commandments: though the guilt of a single offence against it is certainly not so great, nor will it be visited with the same severity, as the violation of all its precepts.

The unsinning obedience which is exacted by the law must be continued, without intermission, from the time we are able to discern betwixt good and evil, to the day of our death. During childhood, the vigour of youth, and mature years, as well as in old age, we are obliged to honour the law, which admits of no relaxation, or abatement of its high demands^{kk}.

4. Such are the terms on which the law of the Most High proposes to confer the rewards of an eternal life. Its language is, "This do, and thou shalt live. Break the commands, and thou shalt die." If any one can, by his own strength, punctually discharge all the duties imposed by the law, and render it an absolute, sincere, and unceasing obedience, he will be fairly entitled to its distinguished rewards; he may boldly stand forward at the day of accounts, and demand the ineffable bliss of heaven, as the just recompence of his righteousness. But where is the individual to be found, who, thoroughly acquainted with the spirituality and strictness of the holy law of God, and the depravity of his own heart, which

^k James ii. 10.

^{kk} Mat. v. 17—20.

hourly betrays him into sin, will pretend that he has paid such perfect regard to its precepts? Where is the man that will have the temerity to affirm, "I have ever, from my youth up until this moment, rigidly observed and kept the Divine law, without swerving from any one of its injunctions: I have never, at any time, transgressed thy commandment, O Lord"? In reality, there is not one of the race of Adam that can justly make so bold an assertion; for all who impartially examine their thoughts, words, and actions, by the moral law, must confess they have kept no part of it: every one, who knows any thing of himself, will admit, that he has often violated the duties prescribed by the First Table; that he has not loved God, or served him as he requires; but has given up his affections "to vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver." A similar confession will be made respecting that class of duties which the Second Table enjoins. Every one, who is at all conscious of the numerous defects which attend his daily walk, will say, "I am verily guilty concerning my brother," whom I have designedly or intentionally offended in some shape or other. I have not always observed (as I ought to have done) the law of love and kindness towards my neighbour. I have been wanting in my endeavours to promote the good of his soul, no less than in attention to his bodily necessities. For these reasons, I condemn myself as a transgressor of the law; which I have broken, not merely in one, but in a thousand instances. Such will be the admission of those who scrutinize their own hearts and conduct with an enlightened eye. Notwithstanding all this, there are persons to be found, who, through an overweening conceit of their own goodness, indulge proud thoughts of their ability to keep the Com-

mandments, and thus to merit eternal life ;—a mistake this, which is not less fatal than it is common. But the Scripture instantly checks such presumption, in the most decided language : “ There is none righteous, no not one. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” “ For in many things we all offend.” “ Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law ; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God¹.”

5. Thus we perceive that every one stands convicted of countless offences, which preclude the possibility of his being saved by the deeds of a law requiring absolute perfection. Does the law then tolerate, or pass over in silence, the insults which are daily offered to it ? Does it allow men to dishonour its precepts with impunity ? Certainly not ! The moment it is in any respect violated, it demands satisfaction for the injury which it has received : like an enraged creditor, it claims, with rigorous importunity, the discharge of its debts ; saying, to every transgressor, “ Pay me that thou owest :” and it delivers up the offender to the tormentors, till payment be made¹¹.

But we have abundantly proved the utter inability of fallen man, either to keep the law, or make reparation for his sins to the justice of God : and, therefore, he must endure the punishment it inflicts upon his transgression, unless the Divine Legislator will permit some one to become his surety, and suffer the merited wrath in his behalf. “ Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them^m.”

6. But what is the specific nature of the curse,

¹ Rom. iii. 9—24. ¹¹ Mat. xviii. 28—34. ^m Gal. iii. 10.

which the violation of the Commandments incurs. It may be replied, that every thing is included in it, which is destructive of the soul's welfare. It affects a man in this life, as well as that which is to come. Even here, the law binds over those who break it, to condemnation. The wrath of God continually abideth on them^m. The malediction of Heaven impends over them and their possessions. "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be, when thou comest in; and cursed shalt thou be, when thou goest outⁿ."

Such is the condition of one under the law, in this world: but the peculiar misery of that state will not be known, till death shall convey him to the abodes prepared for the damned. There he will be tormented day and night, suffering the full penalty of the law, which now consigns him to remediless woe. Nothing, then, can be imagined more terrific, than the punishment of unpardoned sin. Oh, that you, who perpetrate all manner of evil, without regard to consequences, may pause, and consider the threatenings of God against it!

7. You who have not repented of your iniquities, and fled to the Saviour for refuge, are under the curse of the broken law, which remains in full force against you. Will not the misery of your present state, and the horrible prospects which await you beyond the grave, convince you of the necessity of inquiring, "Is there any method of escaping the wrath of Heaven, which is kindled against us? Is there any way, in which God can remit our offences, consist-

^m John iii. 18, 36.

ⁿ Deut. xxviii. 15—20.

ently with the demands of his justice?" To all who sincerely ask these questions, the Gospel returns an answer, calculated to allay their fears, and give them peace. It declares that Christ, by his voluntary obedience, has fulfilled the law; and that all who believe in him are interested in his merits, and are for ever absolved from guilt and condemnation^o. Betake yourselves, then, without any hesitation, to Jesus; whose sacrifice of himself, on the cross, not only procures pardon of sin, but the possession of an eternal inheritance^p. Earnestly entreat the Father of Mercies to give you that faith which will enable you to appropriate the benefits of Christ's passion: then, being delivered from the bondage and wrath of the law, you will value, above all things, the glorious liberty and privileges to which his Gospel admits you.

^o Acts xiii. 38, 39. Gal. ii. 16.

^p 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

LECTURE XIII.

DESIGN AND USE OF THE MORAL LAW.

Gal. iii. 24. *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

Laws are professedly instituted to answer important purposes. They are framed for the benefit of society generally, and the individuals of which it is made up particularly, whose property and persons they promise to defend and secure. They afford, when fairly enforced, a shelter to the virtuous subject, against the machinations of corrupt designing men, who, without the restraints of salutary laws, might give the reins to passions, which would expose all rights, both human and Divine, to their capricious violence^a.

God must of necessity have proposed some end, by

^a 1 Tim. i. 5—11.

the enactment of the moral law, which, we may infer from his character, would be honourable to himself, as well as beneficial to his creatures. On consulting the Bible, we find this opinion is fully confirmed; and gather from its contents, that the law was designed to publish the spotless purity of God, our obligations to serve him, and the qualities of good and bad actions; that it was intended to convince us of sin, to declare its heinousness, and to deter us from the commission of it, by exhibiting the peril to which it exposes us; in short, to teach us the folly of confiding in it for justification, to shew us our wants, and to direct us to the Gospel, which offers to supply them. A few remarks, on each of these points, will enable us to see more distinctly the important offices which the law sustains, and the great advantages which accrue from its proper use.

1. The law was doubtless given to afford us adequate ideas of the righteousness of God. It represents him as a Being of unsullied rectitude, holiness, and justice; as so infinitely pure, that he cannot regard transgression with any allowance^b. Reason alone might have taught us to entertain exalted sentiments of the power, wisdom, and benevolence of the Lord; but it was left for the publication of the Divine Law, to manifest his fixed abhorrence of all iniquity, and his resolution to punish incorrigible sinners; it was for the law to inform us, that wicked thoughts, improper desires, and a vicious state of the affections, are as truly sins in the judgment of God, as adultery, theft, murder, or any other flagrant offence^{bb}. It behoves us, therefore, to study the Commandments; which serve as a mirror to reflect the holiness of God; of which, and of the demerit of sin,

^b Hab. i. 13.

^{bb} Mat. v. 25—31.

our knowledge will be correct, only in proportion as we are acquainted with the spiritual meaning of his sacred precepts.

2. It was obviously another design of the law, to make known the relation we bear to our Maker, the obligations we are laid under to serve him, and the holy nature of that worship which he approves. He is called "OUR GOD;" a name that claims our sincere and devout obedience; which is, "a reasonable service," with which he will not dispense^c. In the Divine Word, our duty to him and one another, under all circumstances, is so clearly described, "that he who runs, may read it."

3. Hence, the law was evidently intended to be a standard, by which we might try our actions, and ascertain whether they are right or wrong. "Whilst man possessed the glory he received from his Maker, a law engraven on tables of stone was needless; because the graces of his soul were a living copy of the law." "As face answereth to face in the water, so did Adam's unsullied mind to the will of God." But with man in his fallen state the case is entirely altered. Instead of an accurate knowledge of Divine truth, the natural man, if left to himself, is not able to find out but a very small part of his duty. The faculties of his mind are so much impaired, that he is frequently at a loss to determine what is good, or bad, blameable, or praiseworthy. Even amongst a people who had acquired universal reputation for wisdom and science, things utterly detestable were openly practised and sanctioned^d; which is a convincing proof, that man, without Divine teaching, has no light in himself to discover a rule of life which ought to be trusted. It is an important design

^c Rom. xii. 1.

^d ib. i. throughout.

of the law, therefore, to supply this defect, to deliver us from mistakes about our duty, and to give us a rule of action, which removes all ground for misconception and debate. "To the Law and the Testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them^e."

4. It is a principal object of the law to convince us of sin; which it never fails to do, when its instructions are regarded. It produced this effect upon St. Paul; who confessed, that the great lessons which it taught him were of the highest use to his own soul. "I was alive," says he, "without the law once;" that is, I imagined I was living in such exact conformity to its precepts, as would certainly ensure my acceptance with God: "but when the commandment came," when I understood its spiritual signification, requisitions, and authority, "sin revived;" I felt conscious of many offences against it, "and I died:" now, every hope which I before indulged of meriting salvation by my own righteousness, vanished in an instant; I felt the sentence of eternal death within me, as a sinner ruined by frequent violations of the holy law of God; and saw it was necessary that I should rely altogether on the perfect obedience of Christ Jesus my Lord, who, as my surety, satisfied the demands of the law for ME, and ALL them that confide in his death, as the procuring cause of their redemption from its curse^f.

We may derive the same benefit from the Commandments, if we will but contemplate their strictness and extent, and examine ourselves by their unerring dictates. When any one seriously weighs his actions, words, and thoughts, in these sacred balances, he will find himself light and wanting; and

^e Isa. viii. 20. ^f Rom. vii. 7.—25. x. 4. Gal. iii. 13.

whilst he feels "convinced of the law as a transgressor," he will see himself placed under its wrathful condemnation; from which he has no means of escape, unless a sacrifice, and a mediator, can be found to interpose and to save him.

Whether men thus repair to the law, or not, to ascertain their lost condition, it actually sits in judgment on their conduct, and charges every descendant of Adam with those manifold breaches of its precepts, of which they have been already, and daily are, guilty^c.

5. The law is of great service in displaying the infinite guilt of sin. Next to the intense sufferings of Christ, which fixed an immense demerit on transgression, the Commandments prove that sin is exceedingly sinful^b. The denunciations which they utter against it undeniably set the evil in a most striking light. "The wages of sin is death^d." Now, if the punishment, which will hereafter be inflicted on unrepented sin, bears a just proportion to its heinous nature—as we may be sure it does, (for Jehovah will never stain his character by any acts of injustice towards his creatures,)—then there must be a degree of enormity in it, which men are accustomed to overlook. Thus speaks the Divine Word concerning the intentions for which the law of God was given: "It was added, because of transgressions^e:" and it "entered, that the offence might abound^f;" that its deformity, malignity, and evil deserts, might be exhibited in such colours as should powerfully dissuade men from committing it. Whoever looks at sin through this medium, with a spiritual vision, will discern its odious character, and admit that it deserves God's indignation.

^c Rom. iii. 10—24.

^d Gal. iii. 19.

^b ib. vii. 13.

^e Rom. v. 20.

^f ib. vi. 23.

6. Furthermore, the law is useful in deterring us from iniquity, by apprising us of the danger to which it necessarily exposes us. To declare his unconquerable hatred of sin, God has resolved to doom his enemies to perpetual destruction. His righteous law threatens every one who transgresses it with a most tremendous curse¹. It holds the thunderbolt of Divine vengeance, as lifted up and ready to fall on the head of the offender. It brings men under fear of a judge, who will certainly visit their sins with condign punishment; of which, the past judgments executed on the ungodly afford a positive assurance^m. May these terrors of the Lord dissuade you from the practice of evil deeds, for which such endless wrath is prepared! May you be afraid to insult the authority of God any longer! and, returning to him with deep sorrow for all your former misdoings, may you heartily seek his grace, to pardon them, and to enable you hereafter to walk in strict accordance with his holy will!

7. It is clear, that a very useful design of the law is, to confound the pride of self-righteous persons, who, in vain, seek justification by it. "The commandment was, indeed, ordained to be unto life," for truly righteous men: and no doubt the conduct of Adam and Eve, whilst they continued in a state of innocence, was conformable thereto. But they soon infringed the covenant of works, and thus were obliged to avail themselves of the mercy of God, to be afterwards displayed through a crucified Redeemerⁿ.

Ever since the Fall, not one of the human raceⁿⁿ has been in a condition to obey a law which rigidly exacts a perfect righteousness; in default of which it

¹ Gal. iii. 10.

^m 2 Pet. ii. 4—7. Jude.

ⁿ Gen. iii. 15.

ⁿⁿ Gal. iii. 21—25.

inflicts its awful penalty. "Wherefore, then, serveth the law?" Its office principally is, to arraign and convict men of transgression; and to consign every impenitent offender, who dies without an interest in the atonement of Christ, through which the contrite are saved, to endless punishment. Hence it is called the ministration of condemnation, and of death^o: first, it fastens a conviction of guilt on the conscience; and then it passes a sentence of death, which binds over every Christless soul to eternal sufferings in hell. What folly is it, then, still to cleave to the law for justification, by which a man never can be saved, without a sinless obedience to its demands; an obedience which no imperfect creatures, like ourselves, are capable of performing^p.

Reader, are you engaged in the hopeless attempt of obtaining acceptance with God in this way? and, can you seriously think you have already kept the Commandments, and are likely to continue in such an unbroken course of holiness as they require? A knowledge of yourself would correct a thought so arrogant and delusive; for, when you remember the open and secret offences of your past life, and consider that want of conformity with the will of God which is observable in your daily walk; and, furthermore, when you think upon the corrupt state of your heart, which is alienated from God; how can you expect salvation by a law, which will not tolerate a single failure, nor assign the reward of everlasting life, but on the ground of perfect obedience? The confessions of Job^q, David^r, Isaiah^s, and St. Paul^t, shew the absurdity of such an expectation. Why then expose yourself any longer to the delusion of

^o 2 Cor. iii. 7—10. ^p Rom. vii. 14—25. ^q Job ix. 2, 3. xlii. 5, 6.
^r Ps. cxix. 96. cxliii. 2. ^s Isai. i. 5. ^t 1 Tim. i. 13.

Satan; who has filled you with a proud opinion of your own merit, in order to blind your mind, "lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ should shine into it?" Henceforth renounce all expectations of saving yourself: for such a sentiment tends to supersede the meritorious death of Christ, to which every redeemed soul must finally ascribe its salvation^{uu}.

8. A very beneficial design of God's law is, to make depraved man sensible of his various wants. It is well suited to answer this purpose, by exhibiting a standard of perfection, to which every one's conduct should be referred. So long as we are unacquainted with the unblemished purity of the Divine character, and the Gospel method of justification, we shall remain in total ignorance of our spiritual necessities: with the Laodiceans, we shall fancy we are possessed of every moral and religious excellence^x; or, like the young man who came to Christ with such exalted ideas of his own attainments, we shall ask, in the pride of our hearts, What lack we yet^{xx}? or else, with the self-justifying Pharisee, we shall extol our good deeds, and exult over the rest of mankind, as if we deemed ourselves much better than they^y. The Scripture censures such boasting, as the effect of a deceived heart: and the moment we see the holiness of God in the mirror of his perfect law, the deception is removed; and instead of glorying in ourselves, we learn that our own righteousness, in which we once trusted for acceptance, is not only insufficient for the purpose^z, but is absolutely defiled, even as filthy rags^a. Now, the best actions we ever performed clearly appear defective, both in mo-

^x 2 Cor. iv. 4.

^{uu} Rev. vii. 14, 15.

^x Rev. iii. 17.

^{xx} Mat. xix. 20.

^y Luke xviii. 11, 12.

^z Isa. xxviii. 20.

^a Isa. lxiv. 6.

tive and in end. Now, we begin to suspect that we have been too often actuated by a love of applause ; and that many things which have raised us in the estimation of men, have had no other origin than ostentation, a thirst of human applause, or a wish to compound with God for our sins.

Thus a discovery of the wickedness of the heart makes every convinced sinner exclaim, " O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ^b ? " Thus humbled under a sense of his deficiencies, he finds himself a helpless, undone creature. Without any ability to satisfy the claims of the law, or to work out his salvation ; without any personal righteousness, or inherent power to do the will of God ; he sees himself reduced to a condition in which he must perish, unless some one is able to redeem him from destruction.

9. In this manner, the Law becomes, what it was intended to be, an excellent preparative for a cordial reception of the Gospel. A conscience weary and heavy laden with sin can find no repose under the severe discipline of the covenant of works, " which gendereth to bondage : " nay, the burden does but increase, so long as relief is expected from that quarter. The menaces which it holds out are more terrible to an awakened conscience, than the awful circumstances which attended its delivery on Mount Sinai were to the Children of Israel ^c.

The law, however, does not produce such terrors in the soul, but with a view to point us to Christ, who is ready to allay them. It inflicts the wound, that He might heal it, by the application of his grace ^d.

Now, if you have abandoned every false ground of confidence ; if you have renounced every plea of

^b Rom. viii. 24.

^c Heb. xii. 18—22.

^d Isa. i. 1—4.

merit from your own works ; if you feel “ wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ;” the law, in the hand of the Spirit of God, has made you willing to prostrate yourself at the foot of the cross ; and, there suing for mercy, to place an entire reliance on Christ for salvation. Enlightened by this process, you discern his incomparable excellence and sufficiency as a Saviour,—you discover every thing in him suited to the relief of your necessities.

Do you, then, feel yourself a sinful rebel, needing pardon, justification, and peace ? How can these invaluable blessings be obtained, but through a saving faith in the atonement^f of Jesus Christ ? Do you want a sanctifying principle to cleanse your hearts from the pollution of wicked thoughts and desires ? The blood of Christ, sprinkled on the conscience, has this desirable effect^f.

Is it necessary that you should appear holy at the tribunal of Heaven ? You must cast away the defiled garment of your own obedience, to be clothed with the spotless robe of Jesu’s Righteousness, in which neither God nor angels can see any defects^{ff}.

Thus the law is our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith : and it shews us our wants, that we may come to the Gospel to have them supplied^g.

10. It is a matter of great importance to regard the law in these different lights ; and not to expect benefits from it which it never was designed to convey. It cannot bestow life upon us ; yet it performs the friendly office of directing us to the Saviour, at whose disposal the inestimable gift is placed.

^g Rev. iii. 17, 18.

^f Heb. ix. 14.

^{ff} Isa. xlii. 21. Rev. xix. 7—10.

^g Gal. iii. 24—29. Col. i. 14.

We should avail ourselves of the instructions of the law, and feel thankful for them. The traveller, who is treading an unknown path, will not despise the information of a passing stranger, nor reject the direction of the post which points to the place where he is going:—And ought you to undervalue the kind monitions of the law, which are given to enable you to obtain “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory^b?” Whilst, however, you thus esteem the Law as a system of discipline to prepare you for the Gospel, beware how you apply it to improper uses. Do not, like some, lower the obedience which it enjoins, in order that they may have full scope for gratifying their wicked desires. This is a manifest contempt of the authority of the Divine Legislator, whose law admits of no relaxation^c. Nor, like multitudes blinded with a conceit of their spiritual strength, falsely imagine you are able to observe inviolably its precepts, and merit everlasting life. The Word of God reprobates the false notion, by affirming, “there is none other name (but that of Christ) under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved^d.”

^a 2 Tim. ii. 10.^b Matt. v. 17, 18.^c Acts iv. 12.

LECTURE XIV.

ON THE COVENANT OF GRACE, OR THE DISPENSATION OF THE GOSPEL.

Jer. xxxi. 31. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah.

MAN, having broken the covenant of works, was now plunged into an abyss of woe, from which he never could have extricated himself. Having, of his

own accord, withdrawn from the service and protection of God, he was brought into a most deplorable state of captivity. The sport of sinful passions and desires, every temptation would serve to carry him further away from his Maker; whilst Satan, by whom he was enslaved, would tyrannize over him, and lead him on to the commission of fresh acts of outrage against the offended Majesty of Heaven. Being thus deservedly "given up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient," what else could he expect, but "that recompence of his error which was meet?" He could do nothing to repair the injury which he had offered to God, whose law he had wantonly infringed. He had lost the power to comply with the Divine will in future, and had incurred a penalty which exposed him to endless wrath. Thus, as an outcast from the society of heaven, and as a companion of devils, man must inevitably have sunk under the burden of his guilt and sorrow, if God, who in the midst of judgment remembers mercy, had not displayed the most signal compassion towards him.

At the very moment when Adam and Eve were trembling with apprehensions of merited vengeance, God took occasion to exercise the riches of his grace, by determining, in a way honourable to his perfections, to rescue them from the dread gulph into which they had fallen^a. To carry this merciful purpose into execution, he first entered into covenant with his own Son, who, by virtue of his death, was to redeem his people as a "purchased possession" for himself; and, secondly, he made a covenant of grace with men, whereby he promised for Christ's sake to forgive the sins of the penitent, and to confer

^a Gen. iii. 15.

upon them the blessings of eternal life. Here was a plan fraught with matchless love to ruined man. Here, "mercy and truth met together; righteousness and peace embraced each other^b." Here a way was pointed out to the heavenly Paradise, which is far preferable to the earthly one, from which Adam was driven. Here the brightest hopes suddenly shone upon lost mortals, both unexpected and surprising. Here there is no danger of incurring a forfeiture of privileges, through any difficulty of observing the conditions of the covenant; since He has performed them, who was able "to fulfil all righteousness."

1. Before we speak more particularly of the covenant of grace, we must briefly notice the compact between the Father and the Son. This agreement was made before "the foundation of the world:" for God, foreseeing the fall and misery of man, resolved beforehand to recover him from perdition, and to exalt him to everlasting life and glory, through Jesus Christ. There is an evident allusion to this covenant in the sacred writings. Our Redeemer is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world^c." And Christians are said to be chosen in him to salvation before the world began^d.

By virtue of this compact, God constituted Christ the Head of his people^e; and the Son presented himself a Surety for them. Hence he said to his Disciples, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me^f."

The high contracting parties are thus brought before us by the prophet; "and the counsel of peace shall be between them both^g." As no enmity could ever have existed betwixt God and Christ, the coun-

^b Psalm lxxxv. 10.

^c Rev. xiii. 8. 1 Pet. i. 19, 20.

^d Eph. i. 4. Tit. i. 2.

^e Eph. i. 22, 23.

^f Luke xxii. 28-30.

^g Zech. vi. 13.

sel here spoken of was the contrivance of a scheme of mercy, which was to procure, for sinners, peace and reconciliation with God, and peace in their own hearts.

In consequence of this mutual agreement, the Father demands the obedience of the Son, and Christ cheerfully undertakes to perform the conditions of the covenant. Thus he testifies his consent, and readiness, to fulfil his engagements: "Mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God! yea, thy law is within my heart".

Nor did he only undertake, but actually performed, the task assigned him. "When the fulness of the time was come, he was made of a woman, made under the lawⁱ," and perfectly satisfied all its demands, both in the letter and spirit of them. By the unsullied righteousness of his life, and his "obedience unto death, even the death of the cross," he brought a greater revenue of glory to God, than if all men had kept the law themselves, or had borne the penalty of breaking it. The Almighty expresses his utmost satisfaction with the manner in which Christ accomplished his Mediatorial work: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth! I have put my Spirit upon himⁱⁱ." "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness'sake: he will magnify the law, and make it honourable^k." For this reason, Jesus is named the "Surety of a better testament^l," which is "established upon better promises^m," and conveys an eternal inheritance "to them who are the called according to his purpose."

^b Psalm xl. 6—9.

ⁱ Gal. iv. 4.

ⁱⁱ Isa. xlii. 1.

^k Isa. xlii. 21.

^l Heb. vii. 22.

^m Heb. viii. 6.

Not only did God thus declare his approbation of the eminent services of his beloved Son, but promised to reward them with an immense degree of glory. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father^a."

Besides the homage of the whole creation, the Mediator was to derive exquisite satisfaction from beholding the fruits of his victory over sin, death, and hell, in the redemption of an innumerable multitude of sinners of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue^b. "Ask of me; and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession^c." "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities^d."

It was this recompence, so glorious in its results, that animated the benevolent Saviour "to endure the cross, and despise the shame^e."

Now, the promise of an everlasting kingdom to Christ, as a reward for his voluntary obedience, was partly fulfilled, when "he ascended on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; yea even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them^f." But the completion of it was

^a Phil. ii. 9—11. ^b Rev. v. 9—11.

^c Psalm ii. 8.

^d Isa. liii. 10, 11. ^e Heb. xii. 2.

^f Psalm lxxviii. 18.

more conspicuous on the day of Pentecost, and afterwards, when thousands were converted to the Christian faith by the labours of the Apostles, and Christianity everywhere triumphed over the idolatry and superstition of the Pagan world. And now fresh gems are every day added to his Mediatorial crown; which will continue to receive new accessions of lustre, until all the ransomed throng shall assemble round his throne, to unite in songs of praise to his glorious name.

2. The covenant of grace which God has made with men, is intimately connected with, and founded on, the covenant between the Father and the Son, which has been briefly touched upon. I shall now speak more largely on the nature, conditions, provisions, promises, and threatenings, of the Covenant of Grace, or the dispensation of the Gospel.

It may be thus defined:—The covenant of grace is an agreement between God and men, respecting their restoration from the Fall, to the enjoyment of his favour: God declaring his purpose to bestow everlasting salvation, and every thing relative thereto, upon those who truly covenant with him in Christ; and men consenting to and accepting of the goodwill of God, by a sincere faith and repentance.

Intimations of the new covenant were given to Adam, directly after the Fall, in the first promise of a Saviour: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Afterwards, it was more explicitly revealed to Abraham: "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God

¹ Gen. iii. 15.

unto thee, and thy seed after thee". And, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed".

The Ceremonial Law given on Mount Sinai was designed to shadow forth the Gospel Covenant of Grace; and all its sacrifices and ordinances pointed to Christ, whose death on the cross was the substance and accomplishment of them²².

Nor does the moral law supersede the covenant, which was confirmed before of God in Christ, so as to make its promises of none effect²³. It was intended rather to subserve the Gospel, to which it sends men for acceptance with their Maker²⁴. All the Prophets, more or less, make allusions to the new covenant, as the source from whence redemption flows to man²⁵. Not to mention any other, we will cite the dying words of David: "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow²⁶."

The covenant of grace widely differs in its constitution from the Law. The covenant of works is founded on God's authority over his creatures, and their obligation to obey him. The reward in this case is not purely "of grace, but of debt;" as none can obtain heaven by the law, who do not merit it by a perfect obedience.

The covenant of grace, on the other hand, is founded on the mercy of God, and all its provisions are free and gratuitous. Its blessings are conferred, through Christ, upon whomsoever God sees fit;

²² Gen. xvii. 7.

²³ ib. xxii. 18.

²⁴ Heb. ix. 1—28.

²⁵ Gal. iii. 15.

²⁶ Gal. iii. 21—27.

²⁷ Acts x. 43.

²⁸ 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

though, at the same time, they are offered to all who seek them in the appointed way.

Thus the Law grants no favour, but to them that entitle themselves to it by a spotless obedience, which no man can perform; whilst the Gospel freely offers to us its benefits, as the purchase of Christ's merits. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters! and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price^b!"

The covenant of grace then affords the only hope of salvation to guilty man. For this reason, it is called "a new and living way, which God hath consecrated for us. And having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a full assurance of faith," that we may partake of its important advantages^c.

3. This covenant proposes certain terms, or conditions, as means whereby its blessings are enjoyed: and these are, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ^d." The necessity of these graces is clear, if the nature of God, and the situation of man, are considered. The Lord is holy; but we are polluted from the womb: our transgressions against Him are many. How, then, can we expect to please him, unless we repent of our misdeeds; and give full evidence of it, by abhorring and forsaking them? Accordingly, we find Jehovah, in the Old Testament, frequently exhorting those, who have any desire to obtain his covenant blessings, to a hearty sorrow for, and a total putting away of, their sins: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord,

^b Isai. lv. 1.

^c Heb. x. 20—23.

^d Acts xx. 21.

and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God for he will abundantly pardon^a.”

John, who came to prepare the way of our Lord before him, preached the baptism of repentance. And Jesus Christ opened his high commission, by saying, “ The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand : repent ye, and believe the Gospel^f.”

Nor is faith less necessary than repentance, for the purpose of investing sinners with the privileges of the new covenant. “ Without faith, it is impossible to please him ; for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him^g.”

4. The covenant of grace abounds with promises suited to the wants of fallen creatures. It proposes to admit the penitent to the enjoyment of a present and future salvation. In this life, it grants full remission of sins : “ Blessed is he, whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile^h.” It confers justification gratuitously upon them that are saved : “ Being justified freely by his graceⁱ.” It engages to bestow grace, according to the various exigencies of the spiritual life^j. It gives, moreover, the sweetest peace^k ; allows us to hold communion with God^l and affords us an earnest of the heavenly inheritance^m.

The covenant equally provides for the future salvation and glory of all the faithful in Christ Jesus “ My sheep hear my voice ; and I know them, as they follow me ; and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man

^a Isai. lv. 7.

^f Mark i. 15.

^g Heb. xi. 6.

^h Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

ⁱ Rom. iii. 24.

^j Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

^k Phil. iv. 7.

^l 1 John i. 3.

^m 2 Cor. i. 22. Eph. i. 14.

pluck them out of my handⁿ.” “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord^o.”

5. The Gospel covenant inflicts a dreadful penalty upon the impenitent, and unbelieving, and disobedient: “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power^p.” Let all, whom such a denunciation concerns, fly from the wrath to come, by believing in the name of Jesus Christ for salvation, and walking agreeably to his prescribed will^q.

The covenant of works was sealed by the tree of knowledge of good and evil; as the new covenant made with Abraham was, formerly, by circumcision and the Passover, but now by Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. These were appointed as signs and figures, to represent the covenant of grace; and as pledges, to assure those who rightly covenant with God, that they shall obtain all the blessings therein promised.

Christ is called “the Mediator of the new covenant;” because all the mercy which it conveys to men, was purchased by his meritorious death.

Those who enter into covenant with God, receive grace through Christ’s mediation, enabling them to observe its conditions, and yield to God that obedience which he demands^r.

ⁿ John x. 27, 28.

^o Rom. viii. 38, 39.

^p 2 Thess. i. 7—9.

^q John vi. 40—47.

^r John i. 16.

How great, then, are our obligations to the Redeemer! Let his praise be continually on our lips and his name be glorified by us evermore.

6. Thus we have seen, that the covenant of grace was devised with a view to save a ruined world. When all was lost by the first transgression, God, who is rich in mercy, manifested his love to guilty man, "that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus".

Let the Divine goodness be eternally praised, which "pitied us in our low estate," when we deserved to perish beneath the stroke of God's justice. And may his compassion towards us, not only excite a proper shame for our sins, but a cordial desire to live hereafter in the practice of universal righteousness.

The Gospel covenant is every way deserving of our closest attention; because it offers the most secure happiness, and gives a pledge of a bright inheritance, to be enjoyed by all who are made partakers of Christ's death. It has abundantly provided for all our spiritual wants. It meets our condition, with all its woes and sorrows. Have we lost, through sin, that glorious possession to which we were once the lawful heirs? It is regained for us by Jesus, who died to recover it'. Are we liable to the everlasting indignation of God, as transgressors of the covenant of works, and held by it in a state of condemnation? From this perilous condition we are delivered, by an experimental knowledge of Christ, our Advocate with God". Does the law pursue the unregenerate, with threats of vengeance? Its curse is removed from them that trust in Jesus, who has satisfied its

' Eph. ii. 4-8.

' 1 Pet. i. 3-5.

" John viii. 36.

demands for every one of his believing people". Do we need Divine grace to enlighten and sanctify our minds, and to incline them to holiness? The covenant of mercy deals out these favours to those who rightly seek them. All the spiritual influence which is necessary to quicken our souls, and bias them to a life of righteousness, the Gospel gratuitously furnishes: it has pardon and salvation in store for every repentant sinner who is sensible of his numerous wants. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come! and let him that heareth, say, Come! and let him that is athirst, come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely *."

Fervently pray for grace, that you may be able to enter sincerely into covenant with God. Renounce all sin: put on the yoke of Christ, "and learn of him, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

7. And now, poor needy sinners, who pant after true happiness, approach, and feast upon the bounty of your Lord! "All things are ready." "O taste, and see, how gracious the Lord is!" for he satisfieth the hungry; but the self-righteous, who are whole in their own eyes, "he sends empty away."

* Rom. x. 4.

* Rev. xxii. 17.

† Isa. xxv. 6.

LECTURE XV.

MAN'S RESTORATION TO SPIRITUAL LIFE AND HAPPINESS,
BY JESUS CHRIST.

John v. 24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth in Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

THOUGH man is despoiled of his original glory, and is exposed to present and future sorrow, yet there is no cause for despair, if he be but sensible of his

wretchedness, and sincerely desirous to be released from it. Unhappily, the obvious tendency of sin is, to harden the mind, and obscure its vision ; so as to render the transgressor totally unconscious of his misery and danger : but the moment he is roused, by a Divine power, from the fatal lethargy which oppresses him, and is conscious of his wants, there is then hope respecting him, that his “ latter end will be better than his beginning.” Such convinced sinners God thus addresses: “ Deliver them from going down to the pit ; for I have found a ransom for them^a.” God hails the return of each contrite prodigal with delight ; and rejoices over him, saying, “ This my son was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found^b.” Our restoration, therefore, to a righteous state is an event devoutly to be wished ; because, so long as we continue estranged from God, we are dead to all that is truly good, without a capacity to serve him in this life, and a hope of enjoying his blissful presence in the next^c. Our natural desire of happiness should make us anxious to know God, the only source from whence it flows^d.

The spiritual life, of which we are now to speak, is directly opposed to that “ death unto sin” which has been already noticed. The former is the inclination of the soul towards God and his service, from which the highest satisfaction is derived : the latter is the total estrangement of the heart from him, discovering itself in a thorough dislike to his righteous government.

1. In every one who is made a partaker of the benefit, heavenly principles are implanted ; which enable the new-born soul to love what God com-

^a Job xxxiii 24.

^c Heb. xii. 14.

^b Luke xv. 24.

^d John xvii. 3.

mands, and hate the things which he forbids: so that the spiritual life of Christians is a direct consequence of the renewal of their nature in righteousness and true holiness^g, or the recovery of that image and likeness to God in which the soul of the first man was created^f.

Every faculty of the mind feels the divine impulse given to the soul by the renovating power which makes it "alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord^g." The understanding, which before was so dark and ignorant, that it could not comprehend "the things of God^h," is now enlightened, to know "the way, the truth, and the lifeⁱ." The will, which was once so perverse as to be easily turned aside from "the right ways of the Lord," is rectified, and subdued to the obedience of faith. The affections, which formerly sought no gratification but in things which are earthly, sensual, and devilish, are purified, and are made "to savour only the things which are of God." Conscience, which, in its depraved state, was callous, is now become tender, and feels remorse on account of its deviations from known duty.

The members of the body, also, are animated by the spiritual tone thus given to the soul; with which they all act in concert, as instruments of righteousness, to promote the honour of God.

2. The great importance of this new life will be better understood by its effects. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new^j!" It is reasonable to expect that such a change, which is nothing short of a transition from death unto life, will be productive of its appropriate fruits. We find this

^g Eph. iv. 24.

^f Gen. i. 26, 27.

^h Rom. vi. 11.

ⁱ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

^j John xiv. 6.

^k 2 Cor. v. 17.

to be the case in every regenerate soul. The man who is "begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead^k," becomes "fruitful in every good word and work." Long-contracted habits of iniquity gradually give way to the purifying efficacy of grace; and are succeeded by new ones, which evince the Divine power that forms them. New tempers prevail, instead of those evil ones which before predominated.

New hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, animate the breast, and produce sensations and desires to which it was before an entire stranger. Thus "the leaven of malice and wickedness" is removed, that the heart might become a "new lump," holy unto the Lord^{kk}.

The pursuits of a spiritual man are holy. Before his conversion, God was lost sight of; and his pleasure was not at all consulted: but now every thing is undertaken with a reference to His glory, and the welfare of the soul. Prayer for direction from the Lord, diligent perusal of his word for instruction, meditation on his providence and works, and the faithful discharge of religious, social, and relative duties, together with an earnest endeavour after further conformity to his will, and a dread of offending him, bear testimony, that the soul is quickened from "the death of sin unto the life of righteousness." Furthermore, his universal obedience to the Divine commands springs from love, and is not the effect of constraint^l. Grace makes his duty both a delight and a privilege:—"I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart^m."

The marvellous effects wrought by the infusion of

^k 1 Pet. i. 3—5. ^{kk} 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

^l 1 John iv. 19. ^m Psalm cxix. 32.

heavenly life into the soul are frequently mentioned in the New Testament^{mm}.

The spiritual life, like the natural, has its beginning, progress, and consummation. At first, it is feeble; but afterwards, being nourished by the Spirit, in the use of means, it gathers strength continually, until it is perfected in gloryⁿ. The degrees and advancement of religion in the soul are aptly set forth in the instructions of our Lord:—"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened^o." "And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear^p." Thus we learn, that Divine knowledge and holy affections increase, by slow and almost imperceptible degrees, till they arrive to a state of perfection in heaven.

The Apostle divides Christians into three classes; to each of which he gives names^q expressive of their religious attainments.

3. Now, though it is the work of each Divine Person in the Trinity to new-create the souls of men,

^{mm} Phil. i. Col. i. 1—8. 1 Thess. i. 1—10. ⁿ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

^o Mat. xiii. 31—33. ^p Mark iv. 26—29. ^q 1 John ii. 12--15.

yet it is especially granted to Christ, as a reward for his mediatorial obedience, that he should bring "many sons unto glory": hence he is said "to become the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him". St. John testified of Jesus, "that in Him was life; and the life was the light of men". "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him". Our Divine Saviour, who raised the dead by his word^u, asserts his ability to impart life and salvation to mankind: "For, as the Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will". And to shew that eternal bliss is no where else to be found but in Him, it is declared, that all who do not confide in his merits for salvation shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly^{xx}.

But how does Christ raise those who are spiritually dead, from the grave of sin and unbelief? We answer, By the exertion of the same resistless power which he displayed in the creation of the world. "He who, at the beginning, commanded the light to shine out of darkness, must shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". Happily for fallen men, God undertakes the regeneration of their souls, as a voluntary act^{yy}; and accomplishes it by his mighty grace; otherwise, the arduous work would remain for ever undone^z.

The Spirit of Christ is often mentioned as the Agent who begets life and vigour in the dormant

^r Heb. xi. 10.

^s ib. v. 9.

^t John i. 4.

^u John iii. 36.

^v John ii. 43—45.

^x ib. v. 21.

^{xx} ib. viii. 24.

^y 2 Cor. iv. 6.

^{yy} James i. 18.

^z Zech. iv. 6—8.

soul of a sinner :—" The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death^a." " Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his: and if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness^{aa}."

The methods adopted by the Spirit of Christ, for producing life, are various, suited to the different circumstances and tempers of those who are the subjects of his gracious operations^b. Some are wrought upon in a mild and gentle manner. They do indeed hear and obey the " still small voice" of the Holy Ghost; and then an entire change is made in their principles and conduct. But they have no clear perception of the way in which they have been led; nor can they perhaps recollect the precise day or hour when they began to seek the Lord. One thing, however, which is of the highest moment, they assuredly know; that, whereas they were blind, now they see^c. Others are taught " terrible things in righteousness^d." The " fiery law," which they have broken, is exhibited to their view in all its terrors; and a dread of the wrath to which they are exposed renders them truly miserable; till the Spirit leads awakened sinners to Jesus, in order that their burden may be removed, and that they may " find rest unto their souls." And many, through the operations of the Holy Spirit, who at one time applies to their hearts the denunciations of the Law, and at another the consoling promises of the Gospel, are brought, in the hour of affliction, to feel their need of salvation, and to use their utmost diligence to obtain it.

4. The happiness which arises from being thus

^a Rom. viii. 2.

^{aa} ib. 9, 10.

^b 1 Cor. xii. 1—12.

^c John ix. 25.

^d Psalm lxxv. 5.

restored to a life of righteousness, is inconceivably great. Were we to recover a friend, whom we tenderly loved, from the grave, after he had lain in it for some time, our past sorrow for the loss of him would soon be turned into transports of joy and expressions of gratitude, to which it would be difficult to give full utterance. Now, if the reanimation of a body, whose existence is but prolonged for a short time, would call forth such joy, what emotions of delight ought we to feel, when we witness a soul rescued from eternal death, and brought to the enjoyment of all that is truly worth possessing !

No description can do justice to the pleasure consequent on a religious course : yet, as so much is said in the Word of God about the happiness of his Saints, it must not be passed over unnoticed. Thus speaks the Apostle : "To be spiritually minded is life and peace^e." "Godliness is profitable unto all things ; having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come^f."

It is not surprising that God should manifest his approbation of those who perform the duties of piety with sacred delight^g. He blesses them with special tokens of his paternal regard. The offences committed in the days of their former ignorance are forgiven^h, so that they shall never come into condemnationⁱ. The sweetest peace and serenity of mind result from thenceⁱⁱ. Their consciences, being purified by the blood of Christ, are free from those guilty fears which before disquieted them. The light of God's countenance, and a knowledge of their acceptance, embolden them to draw near unto him in prayer ; with a lively confidence, that all needful

* Rom. viii. 6.

^f 1 Tim. iv. 8.

^g Isa. lxiv. 4, 5.

^h Isa. xlv. 22.

ⁱ Rom. viii. 1.

ⁱⁱ ib. v. 1.

blessings will be granted, in that measure which is conducive to their best interests^k. Add to this, that foretaste of heavenly pleasures enjoyed by the Christian^l, and it will be easy to account for the language of St. Paul, when he says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit^m." "Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of gloryⁿ."

It is not, however, till this life is ended, that the felicity of the people of God is complete. Here they share with others the sorrows attendant on a state which sin has embittered. Soon, however, they will be brought into the actual possession of heaven, which in this life they have but obscurely seen through the glass of faith^o. And if the indistinct vision of it, at such a distance, occasions so much satisfaction, oh! what ineffable bliss will hereafter result from fully realizing it in endless perpetuity! "Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, blessed are they who have the Lord for their God^p."

5. Contrast, with the delightful prospects of a Christian Believer, the sinful and unhappy condition of one who is ignorant of God. Every service performed by him is unprofitable to himself, and unacceptable to God; because it does not spring from faith and love, which are essentially necessary to constitute a religious act worthy of the Divine notice^{pp}; for, except obedience arises from love to God, it is but a bodily worship, wasting itself in empty forms and ceremonies^q.

^k Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

^l Eph. i. 13, 14.

^m 1 Cor. ii. 9—12.

ⁿ 1 Pet. 1—8.

^o 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

^p Psalm cxliv. 15.

^{pp} Article xiii.

^q 1 Tim. iv. 8. 2 Tim. iii. 5.

Nor is this all: in such a state, whatever a man may think to the contrary, he has no real enjoyment in life, nor any just expectation of good hereafter. Sorrow and destruction await him, if he goes down into the grave in a state of enmity with his Maker: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God".

To avert this dreadful calamity, pray, all ye who are far off from righteousness, that you may become the children of grace by regeneration. God is the only true source of happiness. They who know him, have "a joy which the stranger intermeddeth not with." You are invited to partake of the blessing. Christ is ready to save you. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life". A sense of want on the one hand, and of danger on the other, should urge you to strive after the possession of a benefit so important and durable.

6. Do you desire, then, that a spiritual change may be wrought in you? Have you the least wish to cast away your past insensibility, and to live to the honour of God? Then listen to the encouraging invitation of Gospel mercy. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light". He is able to quicken you, and by his Spirit to infuse the breath of heavenly life into your souls. To him, therefore, come, with holy confidence. Be not discouraged on account of the number or magnitude of your sins; for Jesus assures you, that, if you believe in his name, he "will in no wise cast you out".

' Ps. ix. 17. ' John iii. 16. Eph. v. 14. " John vi. 35—38.

LECTURE XVI.

ON THE ATONEMENT OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST.

Rom. v. 11. *We also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

THE notion, that God might be appeased by piacular offerings, has been very prevalent in almost every known region of the earth. Ancient poets and historians frequently make mention, in their writings, of different kinds of animals having been sacrificed by the devotees of paganism, to pacify the anger, or procure the favour, of some imaginary deity; whose smile they were anxious to obtain, and whose wrath they sought to avert.

It must be confessed, that such a practice seems quite repugnant to the dictates of reason and self-interest; for it is not credible that mankind, who have always valued the life and service of useful animals as a part of their best possessions, should wantonly shed their blood, if no advantage was to be derived from it. It is, therefore, very improbable that sacrifices should have been the result of human invention: their origin must be traced to a higher source, even to a Divine institution.

1. The use of sacrifices is mentioned in Scripture, soon after the defection of Adam. To cheer his mind, which was ready to despond under a sense of the magnitude of his guilt, and to counteract the mischief produced by the artifices of Satan, Jehovah promised, immediately after the entrance of sin, that the seed of the woman (that is, Jesus Christ, who was to be born of the Virgin Mary) should bruise the

serpent's head^a. The accomplishment of this glorious prophecy shews that Christ has obtained this triumph over the Devil, by his voluntary death ; through faith in whose prospective merits, we trust that our first parents would recover the endless possession of their forfeited inheritance.

Not long after, we are informed that they were clothed with the skins of beasts^b ; which probably had been slaughtered by the command of God, as a typical atonement for their transgressions, and with a particular design to prefigure the death of our blessed Redeemer ; an event which was to happen, at the time fixed by the counsels of Infinite Wisdom^c.

And no doubt the same reasons induced Cain and Abel to bring their respective offerings to the Lord. The oblation of the latter was highly approved, but that of the former was rejected^d. The cause of this preference is stated by the Apostle, in the following passage : " By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts ; and by it, he, being dead, yet speaketh^e."

Thus, in the first ages of the world, the atonement, in its infant form, would easily find its way from the progenitors of our race to their immediate offspring ; and from them, by a regular line of descent, to their posterity. This mode of conveying the doctrine is sufficient to account for its prevalence among the Patriarchs. Noah before the Flood, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob after, severally presented sacrifices to God ; till he saw fit to establish the rite of sacrifice, as the grand peculiarity of the Levitical dispensation.

^a Gen. iii. 15.

^d Gen. iv. 3—6.

^b ib. iii. 21.

^e Heb. xi. 4.

^c Gal. iv. 4.

Under the Mosaic economy, Priests and Levites were appointed for that particular purpose. The Altar of Atonement, in the Jewish Tabernacle, streamed, day and night, with the blood of innocent victims, which were slain "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people^f." Under the Law, the most trivial, as well as the greatest offence, whether it was committed knowingly or unwittingly, could not be forgiven without an expiation. The Gospel Covenant, also, was confirmed by the "shedding of the atoning blood of Christ, without which there is no remission^g."

Our Saviour's death was clearly typified by the Legal offerings, which pointed to him as the great sacrifice, to which they especially referred. Hence St. Paul affirms, that they were "shadows of good things to come^h;" which could "not make them that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; being imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for usⁱ."

2. Atonement signifies a sacrifice offered with a view to bring about a reconciliation between God and man, who had previously been in a state of variance and disunion. This is precisely the light in which the Bible places before us the atonement of our Saviour. The whole world had apostatized from God, and trodden his laws under their feetⁱⁱ. To

^f See Lev. throughout.

^g Heb. ix. 22. ^h ib. x. 1. ix. 9, 10.

ⁱ Heb. ix. 11—13.

ⁱⁱ Psalm xiv. 1—4.

mark his abhorrence of their crimes, and assert the claims of his justice, as the Righteous King of heaven, Jehovah required an adequate satisfaction, as the only terms on which he would receive back his rebellious creatures to favour.

3. But who was to satisfy God for the transgression of his law? Not one of the countless millions of sinners, who had subjected themselves to its curse, could make the needful compensation. The voice of inspiration loudly declares, that no man "can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever^k." Could not the united hosts of angels concert a plan to rescue our race from impending ruin? We answer, No: for, as created beings, bound to glorify God, they could not place that obedience to the account of others, which they were obliged to perform for themselves.

For this reason it is obvious, that none but a Divine Person, in our nature, was competent to undertake the arduous task of restoring our species to the lost friendship of Heaven; who, by a communication of righteousness from his unbounded fulness, could justify, sanctify, and glorify, even "the chief of sinners."

It was expedient that our Redeemer should be God; otherwise his atoning sacrifice could not be infinitely available: and it was absolutely necessary that he should be man, partaking of the same nature as those persons in whose stead he suffered; in order, that, in that very nature which had offended, he might obey the violated law, and thus be fully qualified to act as their Surety and Substitute^{kk}. To accomplish the benevolent work of our redemption,

^k Psalm xlix. 7, 8.

^{kk} Heb. ii. 17.

to which Christ alone was equal, he, being God, added to his Divinity the human-nature ; and thus died on the cross, to make atonement for the sins of mankind. Thus "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed¹."

This atonement was made by the active obedience and passive sufferings of our crucified Lord. His innocent life, which afforded a complete exhibition of the righteousness which the moral law demands—his incessant endeavours to honour God by his personal ministry—the privations to which he cheerfully submitted, in the pursuit of the great object which he had in view—his voluntary poverty, hunger, thirst, and watchings—his meekness under reproach and derision—and his ceaseless efforts to do good to all, yea, even to his most bitter enemies—stamp a high character of excellence upon his conformity to the will of his heavenly Father.

But it is principally to his death on the cross that we must ascribe our deliverance from the vengeance which sin deserves. The agony of our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane, where "great drops of blood" flowed from his body, was but a fearful prelude of far greater sufferings to come. He was apprehended, at the instigation of Judas, by the Chief Priests and Elders ; who led him away, bound, to Caiaphas, in whose palace he was mocked and smitten. Having been examined in the great Council of the Jewish nation, he was conducted to the bar of Pilate, where many accusations were brought against him, which his adversaries could not prove. His judge openly protested his innocence, saying, "I find no fault in him."

¹ Isa. liii. 5.

In opposition to this declaration, the voices of the Chief Priests, who thirsted for his blood, prevailed, and they wickedly condemned him to suffer death. With one consent, they demanded his crucifixion. Then he was hurried away to the scourging pillar; where his hands were fastened, and his back lacerated with cruel scourges, until the blood trickled to his heels. They arrayed him with a purple robe, and put a crown of thorns upon his head; and then, in derision, said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Lastly, they confirmed their hatred against him, by leading him away to be crucified between two malefactors; one on his left hand, and the other on his right. Whilst he hung for six tremendous hours on the accursed tree, he was insulted with the taunts and reproaches of the spectators. To add to his accumulated sufferings, Satan, and the Powers of Darkness, were permitted to assault his righteous soul; and God, who before listened to his supplications, now seemed to shut his ears, whilst his beloved Son exclaimed, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Upon a review of such unexampled sufferings, well might Jesus say with the Prophet, when weeping over the desolations of Jerusalem, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger!"

5. Now the voluntary atonement of Christⁿ, who is equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, must of necessity be all efficacious. The single circumstance of his being God, stamps such a value upon

ⁿ Mat. xxvii. 46. John xviii. and xix.

^m Lam. i. 12. ^a John x. 17, 18.

his death, as gives it infinite efficacy to atone for the sins of the whole world^o. Holy Writ speaks in exalted terms of the sovereign virtue of Christ's sacrifice: "For, if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the Living God^p?" "Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them^q." "By one offering, he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified^r."

Language so encouraging as this, warrants the vilest of men to hope for mercy through faith in Christ's atonement; provided they turn unto the Lord, with true humility of soul, on account of their multiplied trespasses against him. That blood which was spilt on Calvary, is all-sufficient to wash out the foulest stains of guilt, and to sanctify the heart. Let the weary and heavy-laden sinner make trial of its wonderful power. Let him behold Christ crucified, with the eye of faith; and he will find that the sight is capable of affording him peace, pardon, and lively manifestations of spiritual joy^r.

6. The death of Jesus must not be looked at as an accidental event: for, although the Jews acted freely as agents in the wicked deed of his crucifixion, yet were they only instruments, as St. Peter affirms, in fulfilling the secret purposes of Heaven. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked

^o 1 John ii. 1—3.

^p Heb. ix. 13, 14.

^q ib. vii. 25,

^r Heb. x. 10—15.

^r Isa. xlv. 22—25.

hands have crucified and slain¹." "It pleased the Lord to bruise him: he hath put him to grief²."

7. We are further taught, in the oracles of eternal truth, to regard the crucifixion of Christ as a real atonement to Divine Justice for our offences, whereby we obtain remission of our sins, and are made partakers of the benefits of redemption.

Had God dismissed sin, without the infliction of a suitable penalty, Satan would have had reason to boast, that our salvation had been effected in a way derogatory to the honour of God; and he might further have urged, that, as God had forgiven iniquity without a proper satisfaction having been made to the Law, he was indifferent to good or evil; yea, that they were both alike in his sight. But such accusations are clearly taken away by the manner in which we have been redeemed. Rather than sin should go unpunished, God consented to yield up his coequal Son to an ignominious death; in the endurance of which he suffered all the torments which the violated law could inflict. Thus "God hath set him forth (to the whole world) to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus³."

Our Saviour, who well understood the object of his mission to our world, attests, that "he came to seek and to save that which is lost," by "giving his life a ransom for many⁴." At the institution of the Sacrament, which was intended to remind us of his death, and the benefits which result from it, he spake of the wine as emblematical of his "blood,"

¹ Acts ii. 23.

² Isa. liii. 10.

³ Rom. iii. 25, 26.

⁴ Mat. xx. 28. Luke xix. 10.

which was shortly after to be “shed for many, for the remission of sins^{*}.”

The atonement of Christ is always spoken of, in the Sacred Records, as the procuring cause of our reconciliation; as the medium through which we receive the grant of every spiritual favour. “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him^{xx}.”

Moreover, to cut off the delusive expectations of those who are disposed to confide in their own righteousness for eternal life, and to establish the faith of all who are truly penitent, the atonement of Christ is declared to be the only means by which sinners can be saved, and attain the possession of everlasting happiness. “Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are freely justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses^y.” “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved^z.” “Him hath God exalted with his right-hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins^a.”

The glorified Spirits, whom St. John saw in vision before the throne of God, attribute their salvation to the vicarious sufferings of our Exalted Redeemer. Without a single discordant voice, they cry, “Unto

^{*} Luke xxvi. 28. ^{xx} 2 Cor. v. 18—22. ^y Acts xiii. 38, 39.

^z Acts iv. 12. ^a ib. v. 31.

Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever^b!" "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests^c."

8. The sacrifice of Christ, to which so much importance is reasonably ascribed, gave infinite satisfaction to God; because "it magnified the law, and made it honourable^{cc}. Indeed, he hath more honoured the law by his obedience unto death, than if every one of the race of Adam had observed its injunctions in their own persons; for being God, and not owing obedience to the law in that character, he hath fully satisfied its claims, and hath brought infinitely more glory to God, than could have accrued to him from the united works or sufferings of all his imperfect creatures. In testimony of his approbation of the infinitely meritorious undertaking of his Son, "the Father hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father^d."

And as a reward for his meditorial services, God has engaged to bestow upon him "an everlasting kingdom, which shall not be destroyed; a dominion extending from one end of the earth to the other^e." "Because he hath poured out his soul unto death,

^b Rev. i. 5, 6.

^c ib. v. 9, 10.

^{cc} Isa. xlii. 21.

^d Phil. ii. 9—12.

^e Dan. vii. 13, 14.

therefore he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities^f.”

Notwithstanding the explicit declarations of God in his word, unbelievers have raised objections against this, as well as every other doctrine of our most holy religion. Their cavils represent the atonement as being at direct variance with the attributes of the Deity. An appeal, however, to Scripture, wherein he hath revealed his mind on the subject, will evince that there is no sort of foundation for such a charge. From this source we learn, that the atonement, so far from being incompatible with the Divine perfections, perfectly accords with them all, and sheds a glory around them which nothing but scepticism and infidelity refuse to behold and admire.

9. It is fully consistent with the prescience and omniscience of the Lord. “Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world^g.” Before the creation of man, God, doubtless, foresaw that he would depart from the way of righteousness, and render himself amenable to the law. In anticipation of this evil, and with a view to counteract its dire effects, he made ample provision for recovering our lost race, by entering into covenant with his Son to redeem us from all iniquity^h. And hence, St. Peter asserts, that the sacrifice of Christ, as offered in the purposes of Heaven, was prospectively efficacious before the world began. “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversa-

^f Isa. liii. 10—12.

^g Acts xv. 18.

^h Zach. vi. 13.

tion received by tradition from your fathers ; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot ; who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for youⁱ.”

10. The veracity of God is greatly honoured by the atonement. He promised, after the Fall, to redeem mankind from the degraded captivity in which they were held by Satan, by means of the incarnation and sufferings of Christⁱⁱ. The Saviour made his appearance at the period appointed by the Father. “ When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons^k.”

11. But the justice of God is also most awfully illustrated by the sacrifice of Christ. Sin offered an affront to the Divine Majesty, which could not be forgiven, without an adequate satisfaction made by the Lord Jesus Christ ; who, rather than God should be dishonoured, or man should perish eternally without remedy, consented to bear in his own person the full weight of that wrath which must have fallen on a guilty world, and have sunk it to the nethermost hell^{kk}.

12. The atonement illustriously exhibits the benevolence and compassion of our heavenly Father towards his apostate children. “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life^l.”

13. The wisdom of God is strikingly manifested in it. None but an infinite understanding could have

ⁱ 1 Pet. i. 18—20.

Gen. iii. 15.

^k Gal. iv. 4.

^{kk} Isa. lxiii. 1—5. 1 Pet. ii. 24.

^l John iii. 16.

devised a scheme so well suited to retrieve the ruined circumstances of man. In the plan of redemption by Christ, God is said to have "abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence^m." Whilst he secures the honour due unto himself, he can exercise mercy in the most unexceptionable manner, towards all who approach him through the Mediator. By the death of Jesus, all those attributes which sin had armed against rebellious men are made to harmonize in promoting their salvation: "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have embraced each otherⁿ." How natural was the exclamation of St. Paul, when he viewed the extent of that matchless grace displayed in our restoration to happiness by Christ: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

14. But we must not dismiss the subject without remarking, that the crucifixion of the adorable Son of God forms a striking comment on the malignity and heinousness of sin. The destruction of the world by an overwhelming deluge, and of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire from heaven, were manifest tokens of the Lord's displeasure against iniquity; but there never was so loud a protest entered against it, as that which was made at Calvary by the death of Jesus. There the unconquerable hatred of God against sin was legibly written in lines of blood. There the holiness and justice of Jehovah were displayed in so terrific a manner, that universal nature was convulsed at the sight. The earth quaked, the rocks were rent asunder, the graves opened their mouths, and the dead left their dreary tombs, to proclaim the agonizing sufferings

^m Eph. i. 8.

ⁿ Ps. lxxxv. 10.

of Immanuel^{an}. Now it must be inferred, that there is infinite demerit in sin, since it required so vast a sacrifice to expiate its enormity. Surely there must be a greater quantity of guilt in it, than most men are willing to allow; otherwise God, who cannot act unjustly, would not have visited it with such marked severity in the person of our Surety.

In what light do we view sin? This question is the more important, because, until it is regarded as a dishonour offered to God, of whose law it is a transgression; until we see that it is "the accursed thing" which separates betwixt us and him, and prepares for us, unless it be forgiven, endless sorrows hereafter, we shall think but lightly of the atonement, if we do not altogether despise it. Let iniquity, in whatever appearance it is presented before us, be detested, as the source of every evil which afflicts us in this life, and as the cause of final torment to the ungodly in that which is to come: let it be viewed with abhorrence, when we reflect that it occasioned the bitter sufferings of Jesus Christ, the righteous; who could not put away its guilt, but by shedding his own blood.

That hatred to sin which is here urged, requires the total abandonment of it in principle and practice: for so long as we live in any habit or kind of unrighteousness, or do not daily strive to mortify our evil affections, we do not evince our repentance to be genuine, nor have we just apprehensions of that wrath which awaits incorrigible offenders in another state of existence.

We must repent of sin, or else we shall be forced to endure the punishment of it, in the fire that cannot be quenched^o; since the atonement will not

^{an} Mat. xxvii. 45—55.

^o Mark ix. 44.

avail those who continue impenitent^p. Christ died, not to encourage us in the commission of sin, but to save us from its domineering influence, at the same time that he delivers us from its penalty.

16. Furthermore, seek the forgiveness of your offences, and redemption from hell, by an unshaken faith in the atoning blood of Christ, which must be applied to your hearts to produce a salutary effect. Imagine not, that a mere assent to the fact of Christ's death is all that is necessary to save your souls. You must be personally interested in his sufferings, before you can derive any benefit from them^{pp}. Faith is the eye that beholds the power of Christ to redeem, and the hand which receives and appropriates the blessings of His Gospel. All who thus approach Him, meet with a gracious reception. He remits their trespasses, and grants them life for evermore; he sanctifies them by the effectual operations of his Spirit, that they may be capacitated to inherit his kingdom for ever.

Convinced sinners, penitent souls, who see and feel the danger to which sin has exposed you, fly to the Cross of Christ; found all your hopes of salvation upon Him; for "he hath made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness," which is sufficient to deliver you from every curse that the law can inflict^q. All the benefits procured by the atonement are realized by a firm and hearty affiance in the Saviour, on whom all your expectations of pardon and happiness absolutely depend. And when you are "justified by faith," you will "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ^r."

^p Heb. x. 26—31.

^{pp} John vi. 53—59.

^q Dan. ix. 24. Gal. iii. 13.

^r Rom. v. 1—6.

LECTURE XVII.

ON THE MEDIATION AND INTERCESSION OF JESUS
CHRIST.

1 Tim. ii. 5. *For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

SOMETHING like mediation is visible throughout the natural world; where one thing is so intimately connected with another, as a cause with its effect, that a general community of evil or good is the necessary consequence of the coalition. Most of our temporal mercies come to us through the intervention of others, to whom we must be indebted for them, or else forego the comforts which they afford. The child must entirely depend for his maintenance, during the helpless years of infancy, upon the affectionate efforts of his parents. The mechanic and the artizan, who direct their talents to employments for the public good, have neither leisure nor inclination to attend to the management of agricultural concerns; and, therefore, they must be beholden to the labours of the husbandman, for the bread which they eat; whilst the latter, in his turn, is obliged to the former for many of those useful inventions which contribute to the comfort of our present existence.

A connexion, not very dissimilar to this, prevails in the spiritual world, and particularly in the grand economy of our redemption, which has been effected by the agency of another, without even our choice or concurrence. And as we cannot obtain salvation by our own righteousness, we must consent to receive so inestimable a benefit as the purchase of Christ's blood, or we shall never possess it at all. Heaven, which has been lost through our voluntary departure

from the Lord, can only be regained through him who "hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God^a." To Christ, let our prayers be offered. He is able to relieve our spiritual wants, and to enrich us with all the blessings of his mediation.

1. A mediator is a middle person, who is invited to interpose his good offices for settling some difference or quarrel which has arisen between others. The advantage of such acts of mediation, when rightly performed, are unquestionably very great. They soften, if they do not remove enmities, which might otherwise be continued with inveterate rancour; and heal those breaches, the remembrance of which it would require considerable time to efface. And even where the kind endeavours of an upright mediator fail to bring about a reconciliation between the contending parties, yet he will enjoy the satisfaction of having done what he could to terminate a disagreement, which may be followed by the worst consequences, both to them and to others.

The Lord Jesus Christ freely took upon himself the duties of this merciful office, "for us men, and for our salvation." When we had rendered God our enemy by wicked works, Christ "stood in the gap, to turn away his wrathful indignation, lest he should destroy us." For this reason, he is styled the "One Mediator between God and men^b;" and "the mediator of the new covenant^c."

That he was properly qualified to act in that capacity, betwixt an offended God and his guilty creatures, there can be no question, whether we consider his Divine appointment to the office, or his fitness to discharge it.

^a 1 Pet. iii. 18.

^b 1 Tim. ii. 5.

^c Heb. xiii. 24.

2. With regard to his undertaking in the character of a Surety, it may be truly said, "Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee; thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec^a." Agreeably to this ordination, "he was to bear the sin of many, and to make intercession for the transgressors^b."

3. The dignity of our Saviour's twofold nature, as God and man, gives irresistible efficacy to his mediation; and it eminently qualifies him to promote the interests of the parties for whom he undertook to negotiate. By virtue of his Divinity, he has strength to prevail with God, and to obtain the grant of those mercies which he died to purchase. When, therefore, he had finished the work which he undertook to perform, he boldly claimed, on behalf of his people, the possession of the promised reward: "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world^c." Furthermore, the conjunction of his Divine with his human nature, gives him such a superiority over mankind, for whose benefit he principally mediates, that their cause cannot suffer in his hands.

The method by which he effected our reconciliation with God, proves that he was prepared to make any sacrifice that was necessary to attain so desirable an object. When the bitter cup of suffering was presented to his lips, he did not dash it untasted from him, but drank it even to the dregs, to deliver us from perdition. How then could our happiness be better secured, than by vesting it with one "who, as

^a Heb. v. 5, 6.

^b Isa. liii. 12.

^c John xvii. 24.

a Prince, has power with God and men, and prevaileth^g."

4. Nor did Christ interpose unnecessarily between God and us. There was an absolute necessity for his friendly assistance to mediate a peace between heaven and earth. The whole world was in a state of actual rebellion against the Lord most high. Each individual of our species had revolted, and taken up arms against his authority^h. At this eventful moment, Jesus stepped forward as the repairer of the breach; otherwise the world must have perished through its crimes. He gave himself a propitiation for sin, to bring about our restoration to the Divine favour. And he succeeded in averting the wrath of God, procuring the remission of our offences, and in "opening the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

5. The advantages resulting from the mediation of our Lord are confessedly great. It is a source of the richest mercy, spiritual and temporal, to "the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus." To his redeeming love, they owe their present salvation from sin, as well as their hope of future glory. "He pitied them in their low estate." He delivered them from a most degrading captivity, in order that he might "bring them into the glorious liberty of the Children of God." In their natural state, "they were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, they who were sometimes afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christⁱ." "Now, therefore, they are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of Godⁱⁱ." These were the immediate effects of his

^g Gen. xxxii. 28. ^h Ps. xiv. 2--4. ⁱ Eph. ii. 12--18. ⁱⁱ ib. 9--22.

death ; for the moment he had paid the penalty of his people's transgression, God was pacified towards them, and was ready to confer on them every blessing suited to their relation to him.

6. When, however, Christ "ascended on high to take possession of his kingdom, he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men ; yea, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them^k." He rose to occupy his mediatorial throne in heaven, until, by the exercise of his regal power, all his enemies shall be put under his feet. And when the purposes, for which he assumed this authority shall be accomplished, "he will deliver up the kingdom to God, that he may be all in all^l."

Now, therefore, Christ sits on the throne of glory, as the King of Zion, possessing all power in heaven and earth, regulating the affairs of his Church, and causing every circumstance, even the most afflictive, to promote its present and future welfareⁿ.

7. But he rose not merely for himself, but as the representative of his people. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true ; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us^m." He carries on, then, all the great objects of his mediation in heaven, from whence he has access by his Spirit to the hearts of all who know and love himⁿ. Previous to his removal from his disciples, he consoled them under the loss they would thereby sustain, by assuring them, that he left them for a time, in order to promote their felicity in a better state : "In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you : and if I go

^k Ps. lxxviii. 18. ^l 1 Cor. xv. 24--29. ⁿ Eph. i. 20--23. Rev. iii. 7.

^m Heb. ix. 24. ⁿ Mat. xxviii. 20.

and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also^o." Thus he is our Forerunner; and is gone into heaven to possess it, as well in behalf of his redeemed people, as for himself^p. When, therefore, the days of their pilgrimage are ended, "they shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away^q." Consolatory truth! delightful expectation! How often should believers comfort their souls with the thought, that their Redeemer is mighty, and will thoroughly plead their cause^r; and that, after the lapse of a few years, they shall enter into the same rest as their glorified Lord!

In the mean time, whilst they dwell in this vale of tears, let them bear in remembrance, that, as the Head of the Church, their risen Lord pays especial regard to every member of his mystical body. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young^s." Thus we learn the tender care which Christ manifests towards the sheep whom he hath bought with his blood. He keeps them night and day, lest any should hurt them. He acquaints himself with their varied wants, and promptly supplies them out of the inexhaustible fulness of grace which is deposited with him for the use of his people^t. Do they require assistance to enable them to withstand temptation, and to persevere in well-doing unto the end? their Intercessor knows all their difficulties, and affords them continued help. By his Spirit guiding them,

^o John xiv. 1—4. ^p Heb. vi. 19, 20. ^q Isa. xxxv. 10.

^r Jer. 11, 34. ^s Isa. xl. 10—12. ^t John i. 16.

they are safely conducted, and strengthened to run with patience the race which is set before them; and thus they finally obtain "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He sees the dangers to which they are exposed on his account; he knows that they have to combat the world, the flesh, and the devil: but he does not leave his beloved disciples to fight such potent enemies alone. He considers that they have no might to resist their adversaries, but that which they derive from him, "the great Captain of their Salvation"; and, therefore, he engages to share the perils of the conflict, and to lead them to victory and to glory: and hence the weakest as well as the strongest believers in Christ are emboldened, by his all-powerful aid, to march against the united hosts who assail them. "Out of weakness they are made strong, to put to flight the armies of Satan." Happy are they who confide in the power of the Saviour: under his protection they will be safe from the violence of every assault.

Further: Is the Church Militant exposed to numberless trials and afflictions? then let its sorrowing members reflect upon the encouraging promises of Christ:—"Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation^u." Nor let them doubt but that he will either succour them in the most trying circumstances in which they can be placed, or grant them a speedy deliverance. To every one of his people who are oppressed with difficulties, from which no human

ⁱ Heb. ii. 10.^u Isa. liv. 17.^{uu} Psalm xci. 14—16.

power can extricate them, he speaks in this consolatory strain: "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee^{*}."

8. An important branch of Christ's mediatory office is, to intercede with God in behalf of his people; that they may receive those blessings which are adapted to their different circumstances. For them he pleads the merit of his cross, and exhibits the marks of his sufferings. He shews his wounded hands and feet, and his side opened by the unfeeling spear. These are arguments for the grant of spiritual mercies, which Heaven cannot resist. Accordingly, God, for Christ's sake, bestows on Christians continued supplies of grace, for completing the work of righteousness which his Spirit has begun in them^{**}. Moreover, he presents their prayers, which, being perfumed with the incense of his merits, are accepted through him, and are returned richly freighted with heavenly blessings.

9. The mediation of Christ is a powerful means of procuring for us those temporal mercies which we receive. Through this channel all those good things, which are conducive to our present welfare, flow. Believers should highly esteem their earthly enjoyments, on this account; and refer the measure of them to God, who has promised that "bread shall be given them, and that their water shall be sure[†]." But, as the value of the soul so much ex-

^{*} Isa. xliii. 1—3.

^{**} Eph. i. 11—15. 2 Pet. i. 1—5.

[†] Isa. xxxiii. 16.

ceeds the worth of the body, we ought to be mindful of the words of our Lord, who directs us "to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" assuring us, at the same time, that all necessary things shall be given unto us".

10. How interesting is the view which the mediation of Christ presents! It unites heaven to earth; and opens a friendly communication between God and men, which both exalts and felicitates their nature, by making them, who were once "outcasts, and ready to perish, the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty."

Christians are admonished, by the subject, to make a full use of the privileges with which they are favoured. Is Christ your Advocate in the Court of Heaven? to his management confide your cause: for he is able to secure to you the possession of those rights which he bled to obtain, from the furious assaults of your great adversary, who labours to disinherit you".

Christ is also your Intercessor and great High Priest^m; whose province it is frequently to pray for you, and bear your names before God, that he may have them continually in remembrance. This office; which he sustains for your benefit, should greatly endear him to you; for, by his entreaties with the Father, you are kept from falling away, replenished daily with grace, and possess a well-founded hope of entering into the "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

As Jesus promises to send forth his Spirit to animate you in your religious course, come boldly into his presence, to importune his proffered succour.

" Mat. vi. 32—34.

" 2 Cor. ii. 11. 1 Pet. v. 8.

" Ex. xxviii. 29, 30. Heb. ii. 17, 18.

Feel assured that he sympathizes with you in sorrow, and knows what relief to administer, having, whilst on earth, been tempted as you are. Say not, therefore, believer, even in the darkest night of affliction, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God^a." The Saviour is hourly pleading the merit of his sacrifice on your behalf, through whose mediation you receive innumerable mercies, unsought and undeserved; and he engages not to desert you, but to conduct you to the glorious inheritance which he has purchased for you^b.

11. The intercessory office of Jesus lays a good foundation for a sinner's hope. If his offences have been ever so heinous, his rancour and hostility against God ever so long continued, Jesus, by interposing his mediation, can break down the wall of separation, and effect a reconciliation for him^{bb}. Indeed, so mighty is the efficacy of his blood, that St. Paul affirms, "he is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them^c."

12. But men must be sensible of their lost condition, before they will either value or accept of his promised grace. Do you, then, know the plague of your own hearts? Are you smitten with remorse for that rebellion in which you have engaged against Heaven, and by which you have incensed its wrath? If you have a poignant sense of your guilt, and heartily desire to be delivered from it; if you deplore the enmity you have manifested against God and his righteous cause, and wish to cultivate a sincere affection towards him; then you may take courage from the words of St. John:—"We have an Advocate with

^a Isa. xl. 27—31.

^b ib. xli. 10—16.

^{bb} Col. i. 19—23.

^c Heb. vii. 25.

the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins^d." If you feel your need of his mediation to avert the anger of God, come, and solicit his gracious aid. He knows your wants before you ask, and is ready to relieve you. Repose your souls on him by faith. Commit your cause to the Saviour; who, if he should witness in you the actings of an unfeigned repentance, will intercede with his Father for your pardon, and secure for you the grant of his "blessing, and life for evermore."

^d 1 John ii. 1, 2.

LECTURE XVIII.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

John xvi. 13, 14. *Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*

THE doctrine of Divine Influence on the hearts of men has, of late, been greatly derided. Violent declamations have been made against it; in which its abettors have been pronounced destitute of sober reason and sound understanding.

Some, who idolize reason as a sufficient guide in matters of faith, can see no occasion for the assistance of the Holy Ghost, to teach them the sublime nature or to communicate the invaluable blessings of the Christian religion. Now, if this influence were so unnecessary as they imagine, why should God promise it, as a signal favour of the Gospel Covenant^e? and why should they who are devoid of

^e Isa. lix. 21.

the Spirit, whatever natural gifts and excellencies they may possess, be accounted strangers to Christ, and as persons having no real interest in the benefits of his redemption? "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his^b."

There are others who pride themselves on the correctness of their religious opinions, who nevertheless ridicule the subject, as if it were the production of the most extravagant enthusiasm. Such persons, it is to be feared, wilfully confound the miraculous gifts and operations of the Spirit with his more ordinary manifestations; in order that it may afford them a specious pretext for discarding the doctrine altogether. This conduct is as impious and illiberal as it is pernicious; because sincere Christians, in the present age, expressly disclaim those special and exalted gifts with which the Spirit of God distinguished the Apostles, and believers of the primitive Church, for its establishment. All that we contend for is, that a suitable measure of Divine assistance is still vouchsafed, for the support, edification, and comfort of Christians, in every age. This continued grant of spiritual influence is absolutely requisite for the maintenance of vital religion, and for the success of the Gospel; the natural condition of man being such, that, without grace, he can neither think nor do those things which are pleasing to God^c. The expediency, therefore, of the doctrine, is a sufficient argument in its defence; and, since it is so plainly taught in Scripture, we cannot revile it, but on pain of incurring God's displeasure^{cc}.

We have before proved the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, by shewing that he is possessed of Divine attributes, and that he is styled God, and is placed on

^b Rom. viii. 9. ^{bb} Mat. xxviii. 20. ^c Art. 10. ^{cc} Mark iii. 29, 30.

an equality with the Father and the Son. The reality of his Deity should be always kept in full view ; because it will at once account for the superior efficacy attributed to his operations on the soul ; whereby it is enlightened, transformed, purified, and saved.

We shall specify, succinctly, the character, tendency, and effects of his influences ; that, seeing their value and importance, we may covet earnestly those most excellent gifts which it is his prerogative to impart.

1. The Holy Spirit conducts the work of our salvation, by an inward operation on the faculties of the mind ; which is apparent, by its salutary effects on the life and behaviour. We must not expect the aids of the Spirit, but in the diligent use of prescribed means ; such as, prayer, the perusal of the Scriptures, with meditation thereon ; attendance at God's sacred courts ; a sincere endeavour to follow after righteousness, and to renounce those evil courses which he disapproves.

Our Divine Teacher always treats us as rational and accountable creatures, who are capable of being savingly affected by his expostulations, warnings, and encouragements. Accordingly, he does not act upon us as senseless machines, which must be put in motion by an irresistible force ; but, blessing his own appointments, he removes our dislike and indisposition to good, by infusing a new principle of action, which enables us to delight in the will of God^d.

It must, however, be confessed, that the Spirit is also Sovereign in his operations ; and that there are gracious seasons, when he darts such lively rays of celestial light on the soul, as to produce a conviction of the reality and importance of spiritual things, and

^d Psalm cx. 3.

gently constrain it to comply with the precepts of God in the Gospel. For this reason, his actings upon true converts are likened to the operation of "the wind, which bloweth where it listeth^e." Happy they who are attracted by his power to serve God acceptably! Persevering in the way of obedience, they will be translated, after death, to abodes of bliss; in which they shall worship him, in a more perfect manner, evermore.

With reference to his work, it may be remarked, that all the operations of the Holy Ghost are spiritual; they are designed to raise our minds to the contemplation of heavenly things, and to beget in us a relish and love for them; they are intended to "make us partakers of the Divine Nature," in order that we may be qualified to associate with God, and to share in the employments and joys of the angelic Host^f. It is, therefore, our bounden duty to encourage his gracious influences; and to pray that he may take up his residence in our hearts, as our Purifier from corruption, as our Instructor in righteousness, and our Comforter in sorrow and tribulation.

The great objects which the Spirit proposes by his instructions, are twofold—to dissuade men from evil, and to excite them to the practice of godliness. These beneficial ends he effects, by displaying before us the malignant qualities of sin, and the incomparable beauties of holiness. "He reproveth the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment^g."

2. It is, then, an important part of his sacred office, to convict men of sin. This is no easy task to perform, when our proneness to self-righteousness and self-justification is considered. Difficult, however,

^e John iii. 8. vi. 44, 45.

^f John xvi. 8—12.

^g 1 Pet. i. 2—6.

as it is to open our eyes to discover the frequency with which we transgress the laws of God, and to induce us to confess, in sincerity, that "we have erred and strayed from his ways like lost sheep;" yet the work is easily accomplished by the Spirit of all might, when he "sets our sins in the light of our countenances," shews us clearly our guilt, and makes us willing to acknowledge, "Behold, we are vile^b!" Now, there is no wish, as before, to cover and palliate sin; but it is seen as an evil of the darkest complexion, which deserves execration, because it is hateful to the Lord, at the same time that it is destructive of the souls of men. Now, the trembling penitent freely admits that God would have been just in taking vengeance on his transgressions; and attributes his escape from merited wrath solely to Divine forbearance^{hh}.

Having led the convinced sinner to confess his iniquities, the Spirit of illumination next awakens in his breast a real sorrow on account of them. A remembrance of offences committed against the lights of reason and the warnings of Scripture and conscience, fills his soul with unfeigned shame and confusion. He is alarmed at a review of his conduct; by which he has so greatly dishonoured God; and, were it not for the hope which the invitation of Christ inspires, he would sink under the pressure of his guilt. He is directed, by the same hand which inflicted the wound, to Jesus, who heals it by the application of his sanctifying graceⁱ. Thus a pardon is vouchsafed, as a pledge of that everlasting forgiveness which the righteous Judge will hereafter proclaim in heavenⁱⁱ.

^b Job xl. 4, 5. xlii. 5, 6.

ⁱ Mat. xi. 28—30.

^{hh} Lam. iii. 22, 23.

ⁱⁱ Mat. xxv. 34.

Now, gratitude to God, for having broken asunder the chains which bound him, prompts the contrite man to make sincere resolutions to forsake all unrighteousness: but feeling his need of strength superior to his own, to carry his pious wishes into execution, he most thankfully accepts the assistance of the Holy Ghost, that he may effect the object on which he is so devoutly intent. From Him he derives renewed supplies of grace, which fortify his soul against the assaults of sin, and enable him to resist its fascinating allurements.

3. The Spirit of the Lord is equally efficient in producing good dispositions within us; and His operations are requisite for that purpose. The state of uncultivated ground is a fit emblem by which to represent the condition of an unsanctified heart. As thorns, and briars, and weeds, and noxious plants, spontaneously grow and abound in the former; so the bitter and deadly fruits of sin are the natural produce of the latter. Hence the soul must be renewed in righteousness, in order to give it a proper bias towards God, and to counteract and mortify its depraved inclinations^k. Now, impossible as it is, by any human means, to effect the regeneration of the heart, the arduous task is easily performed by the Spirit of God, "from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, do proceed^{kk}."

This change, from a state of nature to a state of grace, is brought about by a rational process. The Holy Ghost first removes our ignorance respecting the malignity of sin; and then enlightens our minds, to discern the excellence and suitableness of spiritual blessings. By his holy inspiration on the mind, he excites a dislike to the one, and a lively desire after

^k John iii. 3—8.

^{kk} Second Collect for Evening Prayer.

the other. In this manner, he takes away the carnal taste, which "savours only the things that be of men," and imparts a spiritual taste, by which we are led to estimate aright "the things which be of God¹."

Nor is this removal of our blindness and communication of celestial light a superfluous work ; for, without such illumination, we must, however sagacious in other respects, remain ignorant of what it is most important to understand. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned^m."

After we are thus brought, by Divine teaching, to see "what we must do to be saved;" still, through the palsyng influence of sin, we have occasion for spiritual aid, to enable us to practise our duty. We must be "endued with power from on high:" for a man can receive nothing of this kind, except it be given him from aboveⁿ. The Spirit of wisdom and might, in renovating our fallen nature, "not only, by his especial grace preventing us, puts into our minds good desires, but enables us, by his continual help, to bring the same to good effect^o." Every faculty of the enlightened mind feels the animating influence of the Holy Ghost, which leads to actions that demonstrate the existence of a principle within, as holy in its origin as it is mighty in its operation.

Hence it is no wonder if the souls of devout Christians, when wrought upon by the Spirit, should abound "in all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God." What is there which is honourable in the sight of Jehovah, or truly estimable amongst men, which does

¹ Mark viii. 33.

^m 1 Cor. ii. 14.

ⁿ John xix. 11.

^o Collect for Easter-Day.

^o Col. i. 29.

not result from His work of grace within us? It is He who first awakens the soul from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; who, from being miserable outcasts, adopts us into the family of heaven, and vests us with all the dignity and privileges of the sons of God^p. It is "the Holy Ghost who sanctifieth us, and all the elect people of God;" who "witnesseth with our spirits that we are the children of God^q;" who favours us, during our pilgrimage, with sweet communion with the Father and Son^r; who vouchsafes us a lively earnest of future glory^s, and "seals us unto the day of final redemption^t." It is He that produces within us humility, repentance, faith, joy, supreme love to God, spirituality of mind, and "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding:" it is He that "takes of the things of Christ, to impart them to our souls^u;" and disposes us with cheerfulness to submit to the Divine will in every dispensation: and it is He that, after having comforted us in all our afflictions, guided us safely through every danger and difficulty, and wrought in us a capacity to enjoy the pleasures of endless life, puts us in possession of them, and, with the Father and Son, as one God, will become an object of our adoration throughout all eternity.

4. The Spirit of Truth freely communicates his grace to those who sincerely desire it. Are you sensible that his enlivening grace is necessary to quicken your soul? Do you lament before God, that, notwithstanding you see the path in which you should go, you deliberately walk in the way that he condemns? And are you at all anxious to have your feet turned unto his testimonies? Then beseech God

^p Gal. iv. 6.

^q Rom. viii. 16.

^r 1 John i. 3.

^s 2 Cor. i. 22.

^t Eph. iv. 30.

^u John xvi. 14.

“to pour out from on high his Spirit upon you,” in order that your heart may be henceforth under the dominion of a principle of action which shall stimulate you to serve him with zeal and love. Your supplication, if it spring from faith, will return with grace suited to your necessities.

Such assistance is promised in the Old Testament, for promoting the prosperity of the Church of Christ. “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground : I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing on thy offspring; and they shall spring up as the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord’s ; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob ; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.” The prophecy of Joel^u, relating to this subject, was remarkably accomplished on the day of Pentecost ; when, by an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles were suddenly gifted with power to speak languages with which they were previously unacquainted, and by means of which they were qualified to preach the Gospel to different nations, among whom the providence of God called them to labour. Their preaching, attested as it was by the Spirit, was so abundantly successful, that in a short time they filled the world with converts to the Christian faith ; the temple-service of the heathen was generally deserted ; idolatry began to totter on its base ; and Christianity flourished, amidst all the opposition which it had to encounter from the persecution of Gentiles and the bigotry of Jews.

And if we desire a marked revival of true religion in our own day, we should entreat the Spirit of God

^v Isa. xliv. 3—6.

^u Joel ii. 28—32.

to shed his benign influence upon the world, to induce it to embrace the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. The common gifts of the Spirit are as much needed now, as they were in the first ages of Christianity, to enlighten, convert, sanctify, and save mankind; and hence, the Head of the Church militant and triumphant has left a gracious assurance with his ministering servants, "that he will be with them always, even unto the end of the world," to bless their endeavours to advance his cause, and to shield them from the malice of their foes.

Thus we see there is an intimate connexion betwixt the work of Christ and the agency of the Holy Ghost. They cannot be separated in the grand business of salvation. Jesus accomplished the scheme of our redemption; but it is the especial province of the Spirit to apply the benefits of the Gospel, and convince men of their need of mercy*. In the communication of his grace, he is to the soul what the natural sun is to the earth. As the latter is the cause of light, heat, and fertility to the world; so is the former the author of our spiritual life and happiness: if the enlivening beams of this heavenly luminary be withheld, our souls will remain in darkness and error, and be exposed to everlasting death.

The influence of the third Person in the Trinity is essentially necessary to produce in us those dispositions which qualify us to partake of the benefits of redemption. The Apostle clearly proves the truth of this affirmation, by the following conclusive argument:—"For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the Spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit

* Isa. liv. 13. John vi. 63.

of God^{xx}. When he removes the veil which covers our unenlightened minds, "we then know the things which are freely given us of God." Furthermore, repentance and faith must be wrought in us, before we can enter into covenant with God^y. But who is able to smite the rocky hearts of men, and make them pour forth streams of penitential sorrow, except the Spirit, who melts the obdurate soul by his kindly influences? Who can substantiate "things hoped for;" and give us such a realizing view of "things not seen," as makes them evidently present to the mind, and inflames it with a fervent desire to pursue them as the chief good of our immortal nature^z? It is the Spirit of the Lord who thus opens our eyes to perceive the reality and value of eternal objects, and prevails on us to choose and prefer them to all the splendid trifles of this evil world.

6. It appears, then, to be highly important for all, but especially unrenewed men, to form a Scriptural judgment of their guilt and frailty on the one hand; and of the glorious power of the Spirit on the other, to sanctify and strengthen them. His efficacious grace can restore to you what you have lost; namely, the likeness of God, and an ability to work all righteousness.

Do you feel any anxiety to "be born again," to have your affections spiritualized, and your conduct regulated by the Divine will? Do you deplore the darkness of your mind; and have you a desire to be savingly illuminated? Are you convinced, "that without holiness no man shall see the Lord?" and do you wish to obtain this necessary qualification for partaking of "the inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away?" It is the

^{xx} 1 Cor. ii. 11.

^y Mark i. 15.

^z Heb. xi. 1.

Holy Ghost who performs this mighty work, and confers these blessings. He regenerates the soul, gives its faculties a proper direction, and a power to effect what is pleasing to the Lord. He gives the humble soul a right judgment of heavenly things ; which, when taught by him, is made wise unto salvation. By his sweetly constraining power, you will feel disposed, not only to approve, but to cultivate the virtues which God requires ; and, through his sanctifying grace, you will acquire those tempers and habits which alone can render you happy in " the company of heaven^s."

Implore, then, as you wish to be saved, the aid of this Divine Instructor, who is unwilling to leave you in ignorance of the Gospel, and of those sublime truths which it behoves you to understand. His assistance should be sought for continually, to direct you how to approach God acceptably through his Son, and to secure the advantages of his mediation. To urge you to make an immediate application to the Spirit of Life and Peace, think of the danger that must ensue from neglecting to supplicate his favour. All who reject this Infallible Guide to heaven, must be lost for ever, without remedy. And will it not augment the sufferings of those who shall finally perish, to reflect, that they despised that light and grace of the Holy Ghost, by which they might have gained the joys of heaven, and have escaped the damnation of hell ? Whilst God, therefore, " with whom is the residue of the Spirit," is willing to shed his influence upon you, do you thankfully receive the inestimable benefit, and walk, according to his will, in faith and obedience, unto the end of your sojourning in this vale of sorrow.

7. Believers in Christ, you may look with confi-

dence to God for every thing which can minister to your spiritual comfort in this life. He stands engaged to withhold no good which is needful, from them that walk uprightly. You may pour your tears, your complaints, your wants, into his paternal bosom, expecting that he will afford you relief and consolation in every emergency. Do you feel a desire to resemble God more in the beauties of holiness? then you must ask of him to grant you suitable supplies of the grace of the Spirit, in order to accelerate your march towards heaven. In proportion as we live under his influences, we shall have our affections drawn upwards, and be abstracted from the world and its vanities. In the same degree that we obey his godly motions, we shall abound in whatever is pleasing to the Lord.

Those who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, should concur, by every possible means, in his work of righteousness and love upon their minds. The sacred fire which he lights up in the soul may soon be extinguished by a cold and careless behaviour: hence the Apostle admonishes Christians to this effect—"Quench not the Spirit^a." And, as every departure from the precepts of the Gospel is an offence to him, we are directed by St. Paul to act with the utmost circumspection:—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption^b." He will retire from them that provoke him by a wicked and licentious life. They who despise the Saviour, and reject his atonement, will be left by him in judicial obstinacy and unbelief; whilst he will visit, with peculiar favour, those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and keep his commandments^b.

^a *Thes. v. 19.*

^b *Eph. iv. 30.*

^c *John xiv. 15—25.*

LECTURE XIX.

ON REGENERATION, OR THE NEW BIRTH.

John i. 13. *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

It requires but a slight knowledge of the Sacred Records to observe, that they divide the human species into two distinct classes; one of which comprises the regenerate, and the other the unregenerate part of mankind. They are designated by names expressive of their character, dispositions, and pursuits. The former are distinguished by the titles of "children and sons of God, children of light, the righteous, and the faithful in Christ Jesus;" appellations which shew the dignity of their extraction, and the privileges which peculiarly belong to them. The latter are styled "the children of the wicked one, vessels of wrath, children of darkness, and the men of the world"; names as awfully descriptive of their present state, as of the prospects which await them beyond the grave.

Every individual belongs to one of these opposite classes; because there is no other state between enmity and affection to God. Neutrality is not allowable in our religious concerns. Christ will have our most cordial regards, or account us his enemies. "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth^a." Now, as it is a point of the highest moment to ascertain "whose we are, and whom we serve^b," we shall be greatly assisted in this inquiry, by examining the nature of

^a 1 John iii. 1, 2. Lu. xvi. 8. Col. i. 2. Mat. xiii. 38. Rom. ix. 22. 1 Thes. v. 5. Ps. xvii. 14. ^{aa} Lu. xi. 23. ^b Acts xxvii. 23.

regeneration, and the effects which it produces: and, in order to remove some misapprehensions on the subject, it will be proper to explain it, both negatively and positively.

1. It will be readily granted, by all who take any pains to understand our Lord's meaning, that a partial amendment in a man's conduct does not constitute that remarkable change enforced upon Nicodemus, as essential to his entrance into the kingdom of heaven^c; for, if this were all that is intended by the frequent use of that strong language in which the new birth is described, then the plainest truth is so obscured by the manner in which it is represented, as to be more calculated to perplex than to guide the honest inquirer.

Unquestionably, every regenerate person discovers a material alteration in his outward deportment; "he ceases," generally speaking, "to do evil, and learns to do well:" but this amendment is always the result of an inward work on the heart, which is altogether appropriate to his new state. But a partial external reformation in the behaviour may be effected without the exertion of that Almighty power which is necessary in regeneration; since dissolute characters may, and do sometimes, slightly amend their lives in the sight of their neighbours, by their own natural strength, and from interested motives. For instance—The drunkard, fearing that excess will ruin his health and waste his property, may prevail upon himself, occasionally, to abstain from intoxication, and to maintain a shew of temperance and sobriety. Dishonest men, thinking that fraud and knavery are not the most likely means to exalt their reputation in society, may sometimes feel the necessity of pursuing the

^c John iii. 3.

opposite course of integrity ; not from an instinctive love of honesty, but to forward their own secular ends. Further; the hypocrite, in an age when some attention to the forms of religion is creditable, will assume the garb of piety, to avoid reproach, and to cover over those sinister designs which he entertains with the appearance of sincerity. It is obvious, that, in both of the former cases, any external improvement in the conduct, as far as it goes, proceeds more from a regard to worldly advantage, than from a hatred to the particular vices which have been abandoned ; and in the latter, the deceit is too glaring to be allowed to pass currently for that excellence to which it pretends. Of course, therefore, such temporary and spurious alterations are not to be confounded with that new heart which constrains the sincere convert to honour God from Christian principles.

There are others, whose life is not sullied by scandalous offences against society, who nevertheless are destitute of regenerating grace ; as their self-righteous pride, and dislike to the doctrines of the cross, manifest. Such persons, however amiable they may appear in the eyes of their fellow-creatures, must, as well as others, have " a new birth unto righteousness," if they would " serve God acceptably in the Gospel of his Son."

Scripture affords several examples of persons partially enlightened, who were not partakers of the new birth. Balaam expressed a wish " that he might die the death of the righteous, and his last end be like his ;" and yet the Scripture assures us, that " he loved the wages of unrighteousness, and perished in the gainsaying of Core*."

Pharaoh humbled himself whilst the awful

* Num. xxiii. 10. • 2 Pet. ii. 15. Jude xi.

judgments of Heaven were ready to burst with fury on his devoted head ; but no sooner was the threatened punishment withdrawn, or suspended, than he returned to his impious courses, "like the dog to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire^f."

Herod, we are told, "feared John the Baptist, knowing him to be a just man and holy, and observed him ; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly^g:" yet, with all this apparent regard for the Forerunner of our Lord, he, in order to gratify the malice of an infamous woman, gave orders to behead the Baptist^h."

Finally ; the stony-ground hearers received the Word of Christ with gladness, and promised to obey it ; but, having no root in themselves, in time of temptation they fell awayⁱ. These instances, and others of a similar description, prove, that a temporary outward amendment may be found, without a real change of mind and principles.

2. Nor is an exchange of one religious persuasion for another, that regeneration which is of so much importance in the sight of God, and so indispensable to our felicity : for a man, through a love of novelty, may pass from atheism, infidelity, and scepticism, and even from a less objectionable creed, to the profession of the Christian faith, and yet be lamentably "estranged from God by wicked works." To such mere professors, Christ declares, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heavenⁱⁱ."

3. It is a great mistake to suppose, that all who

^f 2 Pet. ii. 22.

^g Mark vi. 20.

^h ib. 21—30.

ⁱ Luke viii. 13.

ⁱⁱ Mat. vii. 21.

have been baptized are spiritually regenerated, and in a state of salvation ; for he only who is in Christ by a true faith, is a new creature^k : and whosoever is thus “ born of God,” does not allow himself in the practice of any known or wilful transgression. To identify baptism, therefore, with the new birth, in our instructions to fallen men, so as to lead them to rest in the reception of the outward sign, without satisfactory evidence that they have “ a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness,” which are signified thereby, is to lull them into a state of false repose, which, if Divine grace interpose not, will prove fatal to their souls.

If regeneration necessarily accompanies baptism, as an effect results from its proper cause, then we have a right to expect appropriate fruits from all who have been regularly baptized, as an evidence of their translation from a state of nature to a state of grace : but do we, even in a judgment of charity, behold, in the great bulk of children or adults who have submitted to the ordinance, any symptoms of that mighty change which is justly designated the new birth ? Are penitence for sin, supreme love to God, deadness to the vanities of the world, and the cultivation of such pious habits as fit men for heaven, visible in the spirit and practice of nominal Christians ? In vain shall we search for these things in any, but in those only who have been “ begotten again unto a lively hope” by the power of God : for, unless “ the tree be made good, its fruit will be corrupt^{kk}.”

And could we consent to the notion which some maintain, that the grace which they suppose to be necessarily conveyed in baptism may be entirely lost ; yet does not this very admission urge upon

^k 2 Cor. v. 17.

^{kk} Mat. vii. 16—21.

those who act contrary to their baptismal vow, the necessity of being renewed again in righteousness, if they would inherit everlasting life ? Hence it is necessary to exhort all natural men, whether they have been baptized or not, to seek the renovation of their souls, as essential to salvation ; for, “ except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” And it is presumptuous in the extreme to restrict the new birth, exclusively, to baptism ; especially as the Scriptures ascribe it to other means¹, in which that ordinance is not even alluded to.

4. What, then, is regeneration ? It may be defined, “ a spiritual change wrought by the Holy Ghost, on the understanding, will, conscience, and affections of a sinner, which is the commencement of a new and religious life, and which gives quite another direction to his judgment, desires, and whole conduct.”

5. The sacred writers use the boldest metaphors, and employ the strongest language, to describe so important a change. The expressions, “ born of God,” “ born again,” are highly significant, when employed to illustrate the nature of regeneration. “ A new-born infant is a new creature, brought into the world by Almighty power, endued with life, and with certain propensities and capacities. It is a rational being, and has every quality pertaining to human nature in a weak incipient state ; but, by proper care and sustenance, it may grow up to maturity, and attain the perfection of manhood.”

In like manner, the Divine power produces, in the mind of a sinner, such a change as renders him a new creature, with new capacities and desires ; but these at first are only in a feeble imperfect state, ex-

¹ 1 Pet. i. 23. James i. 18. Gal. iii. 26. Rom. viii. 14—18. 1 John. v. 1—5.

posed to much opposition and danger on every side. Provision is made for this "new-born babe, in the sincere milk of the Word¹¹," by means of which, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, he grows up gradually to maturity, "until he becomes a perfect man, and attains unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ^m."

Regeneration is spoken of as a new creation: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto 'good works'." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new^o."

It is styled a resurrection, in allusion to that spiritual death from which it delivers the regenerate:—"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins^p."

It is represented as a transition from sleep and death, to vigilance, and life, and activity:—"Awake, thou that sleepest; and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light^q."

It is called "a translation from darkness into marvellous light^r." In a word, it is exhibited to us as a change from sin to holiness, from nature to grace, and from a state of condemnation to acceptance with God.

Although the terms which are used to express the new birth are figurative, yet, after having made this concession, we maintain, that such language is the most proper that can be selected, to assist us in forming just notions of that momentous spiritual truth to which it refers; for, without the use of figures and images, borrowed from sensible objects, we should

¹¹ 1 Pet. ii. 2.

^m Eph. iv. 13.

^o ib. ii. 10.

^p 2 Cor. v. 17.

^q Eph. ii. 1.

^r ib. v. 14.

^r 1 Pet. ii. 9.

be unable to form any right conceptions of heavenly things, which are so much above our comprehension. Instead of objecting to this mode of conveying the sublime doctrines of the Gospel^r, let us express our grateful thanks to God, for thus condescending to familiarize them to our understanding, in order that they may more forcibly strike our attention with a view of their unspeakable importance.

6. The slightest consideration of this subject will evince, that in regeneration a real change takes place in the heart, that will fully justify the language which is used concerning it. We do not mean to intimate that it induces any alteration in the substance and constitution of the soul; it only gives our faculties a spiritual direction. As a river, by overflowing its banks, conveys its waters into an improper channel; so sin, by perverting the right exercise of the soul's powers, has applied them to the worst purposes, even to rebellion against God. Before, then, our faculties can answer the end for which they were given, they must receive a heavenly bias.

Mark, then, the new and vigorous tone given to all the powers of the mind, in its renewal unto righteousness. The soul, which before was benumbed and torpid, and spiritually dead, through the palsying touch of sin, is, by regenerating grace, made "alive unto God," and is capable of performing its appointed functions.

7. Now, the will, once so untractable, and so easily warped in favour of evil, moves in sweet accord with the will and commands of God; it invariably decides in favour of what he approves. The judgment is informed, and the understanding enlightened, by the knowledge of those sacred truths, of which it was

previously ignorant. The conscience, which before was callous and insensible, now exerts its voice in behalf of God and his cause: like a faithful sentinel at his post, this vicegerent of the Lord admonishes a regenerate man to flee from vice, and to pursue virtue. The affections, once debased by low and grovelling objects, are spiritualized, and elevated to the pursuit of the noblest things. The memory, which was once so remarkably treacherous that it forgot what was good, and retained what was evil, is now become the repository of truth and righteousness.

Those new apprehensions, tastes, desires, principles, motives, and pursuits, which are found in the regenerate, demonstrate both the extent and importance of the new birth.

8. There are new apprehensions of God. Before conversion, the Lord of Hosts is generally regarded as a Being who is totally unconcerned about human actions; and he is treated accordingly: "Because, through his forbearance, sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, the sons of men harden their hearts, and say, Behold, he will neither do good nor evil." A different judgment, however, is formed of the character of God by the heaven-born soul. He discovers the unspotted holiness and justice of Jehovah, shining with unrivalled splendour; and hence he concludes, that iniquity must be detested, and righteousness be approved by him, as the chief excellency in his rational creatures.

9. Renewed persons, also, view their own character in a new light. Blinded by self-love, natural men think altogether favourably of their condition. Though "the wrath of God abideth on

^a Eccles. viii. 11.

^b Deut. xxxii. 4.

^c Psalm iv. 3.

them^{an}," they know it not; and thus they go on frowardly in their own ways, until the mercy or judgments of the Lord reveal the horrors of their situation.

But this conceited opinion of our own worth and goodness vanishes, the moment we behold, through the mirror of faith, the unclouded glory and holiness of God^s. Then a judgment of ourselves is formed, not by the false standard of human opinion, but by the infallible test of Divine truth. And what is the consequence? Why, we become sensible of manifold defects, and are made willing to acknowledge with the Prophet, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags^s;" disgusting to the eye of infinite purity; and as unfit to afford us shelter from the just indignation of Heaven, as tattered garments are to defend us from the inclemency of the weather.

10. Further—A new and spiritual taste, appropriate to the renewed state of the soul, shines forth in all its desires and volitions. That insatiate thirst after riches, and the insipid pleasures of this life, discoverable in carnal men, is succeeded by a strong relish for enjoyments of a higher nature. The worldlings say, "Who will shew us any good?" that is, beyond that which we possess. On the contrary, the renewed man fervently prays, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me! Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased^r." Now a more just estimate is formed of the world, and all created good, as well as of the incalculable worth of heavenly blessings. Those objects, therefore, which once had

^a John iii. 36.

^s Job xxi. 5, 6.

^r Isa. lxiv. 5.

^s Psalm lxxviii. 6—8.

sufficient power to captivate the mind, no longer charm and delude it. Indeed, seen through a spiritual medium, they appear emptier than the wind, or lighter than the bubble of the ocean, when contrasted with the glory of Paradise; whilst death, judgment, heaven, hell, and the eternal scenes which they will disclose, are viewed as solemn realities, which arrest the attention and influence the conduct of a regenerate man.

11. The new desires, hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows, which prevail in the breast, are indicative, also, of a transformation of the soul. These passions of the mind are excited by those objects which are calculated to call them forth; and they are chiefly of a heavenly nature. The absence or presence of spiritual good, are the causes which depress or enliven them.

12. Besides, the soul is governed by a new set of principles. No longer held in slavish subjection by the world and its maxims, the renewed man asserts his liberty. The love and fear of God are the motives which henceforth constrain him to action; whilst the precepts of the Gospel are observed and honoured, as they never were in the days of his unregeneracy. Love, then, is the main-spring of his obedience; in default of which, the highest efforts which natural men can make, are only the effect of terror and selfishness: but that gratitude which arises from the display of the Divine benevolence, is warm and lasting, and impels the soul to the cheerful performance of "those things which God would have done."

13. Furthermore—We may reasonably expect, that a work of this divine nature will be followed by a line of conduct answerable thereto. Nor are

our expectations disappointed ; for the pursuits of the Children of God clearly evince their heavenly original. Natural men covet no greater enjoyments than those which the present life affords. If they can but secure the honours, applause, pleasures, and riches of the world, they are satisfied, and look no further, as if they had certainly attained all that is wanting to complete their felicity. But the man of God, though he may possess them in the highest degree, will not be contented with such "things as perish in the using." Accounting spiritual things the only objects deserving his regard, he pursues them with unabated diligence.

"He that is born of God is endued with a greatness of soul, that makes him easily despise and consider as nothing those things which he prized before at a very high rate : he considers heaven as his country, even while he lives a stranger on this earth ; he aspires at the highest objects, and, flying up towards heaven with expanded wings, looks down with contempt upon the earth⁷⁷."

To mortify depraved habits, and to obtain a daily conquest over the sins which beset us ; to cultivate every gracious disposition that can assimilate us more to the blessed God, and to advance, as far as possible, in the path of moral excellence, are the great objects at which a pious man uniformly aims, that he may acquire a meetness for that glorified state of existence, on which he will hereafter enter. It is plain, therefore, that repentance, and faith, and obedience, with love to God, and benevolence to men, and marked affection to the brethren of Christ, deliverance from the uncontrolled domination of sin and Satan, together with a victory over the world

⁷⁷ Archbishop Leighton's Works, vol. iv. p. 167.

and the evil propensities of our nature, hatred to all unrighteousness, accompanied with spirituality and devotion, humility, resignation to the Divine will, patience under chastisements and afflictions, meekness, temperance, justice, purity, and truth, are the natural consequences of regeneration.

14. Such is a brief statement of the immediate effects of renewing grace ; which as strikingly demonstrate the reality and importance and extent of the new birth, as the omnipotence of Him who accomplishes it. The soul of that man which is thus renovated in all its faculties, which are sanctified and directed to heavenly pursuits, so changed in its taste and views and desires, as to love those exalted things which it once despised, and to trample upon all the blandishments of sense, the honours, pleasures, and advantages which others seek their happiness in, is certainly born of God, and endued with a rectitude of principle, which distinguishes him from the unregenerate part of mankind, and restores him, in a considerable degree, to that state of primitive integrity in which our first parents were created².

Who, except those whose minds are awfully debased by sin, can contemplate the renewal of a soul in righteousness with any other sensations than those of admiration and joy ? To behold an intelligent being, capable of the most sublime enjoyments, rescued from the degrading tyranny of Satan, returning to the bosom of his heavenly Father, whom he had ungratefully deserted for the society of enemies ; to see that heart, which was once the seat of every diabolical lust and passion, softened, humbled, and spiritualized, and become the depository of every virtue which flourishes here, and ripens into perfec-

² Gen. i. 26, 27.

tion hereafter, is a sight which affords the highest satisfaction to God²², and the greatest joy to the inhabitants of heaven^a.

We shall participate in this feeling, in proportion as we are acquainted with a change so divine in its origin, and so blessed in its results.

²² Isa. lxvi. 2.

^a Luke xv. 10.

LECTURE XX.

ON REGENERATION, OR THE NEW BIRTH.

John iii. 3. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

THE nature and effects of the new birth have been briefly considered in the former Chapter. Our business in this is to speak of the Agent who operates our regeneration, the means by which he accomplishes the arduous work, the happiness belonging to that state of salvation, the necessity of attaining it, and the certain misery which must ensue from the neglect of it.

1. The Almighty Father of the universe claims the glory of affecting this blessed change on the human soul exclusively for himself. "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise^a." And how can such a claim be disputed?—for, to produce in the perverse mind of man a prevailing delight in the will and service of God, a salutary fear of offending him, and a constant habit of referring all our actions to his glory; to excite in us a dread of the loss of his favour as the greatest evil; to induce

^a Isa. xliii. 21.

us to implore his presence as the only source of real happiness; and to manifest an unshaken attachment to his cause, by cheerfully submitting to loss, reproach, and suffering, for his sake;—this is evidently a work, to which none but a Divine power is equal.

To declare the heavenly origin of regeneration, and to cut off all ground of boasting from men, as if they had any share in effecting it, St. John expressly affirms of those who believed in the Divine mission of Christ, and received him as their Saviour, that “to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God^b.” Will any one, after this, arrogate to himself the ability to renew his own soul, or ascribe it to natural agents and means, instead of the mighty operation of God himself, whose exclusive province it is, to give life to those who are dead in trespasses and sins? Let us rather suppress such an impious thought, by joining in the devout acknowledgments of pious men: “Lord, thou hast wrought all our works in us^c.” “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake^d.”

2. The manner in which this transformation from sin to holiness is accomplished, cannot be investigated. The agency of God’s Spirit, in managing the process of regeneration, is always spoken of in Scripture as being utterly incomprehensible: it is compared to the uncontrolled and inexplicable nature of the wind; like to which, its reality and existence may be clearly inferred from its effects. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound

^b John i. 12—14.

^c Isa. xxvi. 12.

^d Psalm cxv. 1.

thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit^e."

"There is no doubt but that regeneration, which is the infusion of a new and divine principle of life into a person spiritually dead, is accomplished in a moment; for there is no delay in the transition from death to life. No person can be regenerated, so long as he is in a state of spiritual death; but in the instant he begins to live, he is born again: wherefore no intermediate state, between the regenerate and the unregenerate, can be imagined so much as in thought: for every person is either dead or alive; has either the spirit of the flesh and the world, or the Spirit of God, actuating him; is either in the state of grace, or in the state of malediction; either the child of God, or of the devil; either in the way of salvation, or damnation. There neither is, nor can be, any medium here. The Holy Scripture divides all mankind into two classes, sheep and goats; and compares their goings to two ways, whereof the one^f, which is broad, leads to destruction; the other, which is narrow, to life^g; and there is no man who does not tread in one or other of these two ways^{gg}."

3. The Holy Spirit most generally exerts his new creating power on the hearts of men, through the instrumentality of the written word. The simple preaching of Christ crucified, consisting of the cardinal truths of the Gospel, is often made the means of salvation. The faithful annunciation of men's ruined condition as sinners by nature and practice, and their restoration to spiritual life and happiness

^e John iii. 8.

^f Mat. xxv. 32, 33.

^g ib. vii. 13, 14.

^{gg} Witsius on Regeneration.

through the atonement of Christ, produces, when savingly applied to their souls by the Holy Ghost, the most striking effects.

Because the efficacy of the Divine word is so great to vivify and sanctify the hearts of sinners, it is called "the word of life^h;" "the power of God unto salvationⁱ." The Apostles James and Peter bear testimony to its effects in their days. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures^k." "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren; see that ye love one another with a pure heart, fervently; being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever^{kk}."

How marvellous were the effects of the Gospel, in the case of the three thousand who were converted by the first discourse of St. Peter! They were so deeply affected by a representation of their guilt in crucifying the Lord Jesus, that they feelingly inquired, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Even now, the word of God, when blessed by his Spirit, "is mighty to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ^m." Even now, when the word comes "in the demonstration of the Spirit and power," a conviction of the danger of sin is produced, and the penitent is led to pray, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within meⁿ!"

^h Phil. ii. 16.

ⁱ Rom. i. 16.

^k James i. 18.

^{kk} 1 Pet. i. 22, 23.

^m Acts ii. 37.

ⁿ 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

^o Psalm li. 10.

We cannot wonder at the success which, in every age, has attended the Gospel, if we believe what St. Paul affirms of it : "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow ; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart^o."

The administration of the Divine word is, in some degree, assisted by the dispensations of Providence, by the loss of our dearest connections, or by crosses in our temporal concerns. These afflictions are sent from God, to awaken men to a sense of remorse for past transgressions, to convince them of the insufficiency of worldly objects to make them happy, and to direct them to God, from whom they have wandered, for that peace and repose which alone can satisfy their souls. Many, thus disciplined in the school of adversity, and instructed by the oracles of God, have learnt to renounce the world, and to seek heaven as the sum of true felicity. Reader, has the word of God, in the hand of the Spirit, led you to turn from lying vanities, which cannot profit, to God, the only source of comfort ? Have your eyes been opened to see your need of salvation ? Do you seek that purity of heart, without which no man shall see God^p ? If this is not the case, then you are still in natural darkness, even unto this hour ; and you " must be born again^q," before you can serve God acceptably in this life, or enjoy his glory in the next.

4. Spiritual regeneration is evidenced by the illumination and progressive sanctification of the heart. The Fall has spread a thick veil of darkness over the human mind, which renders it incapable of perceiving the hatefulness of iniquity, and the beauty of holiness.

^o Heb. iv. 12.

^p Mat. v. 8.

^q John iii. 3—9.

To remove this film of moral ignorance, which obstructs its powers of vision, light is communicated to the heaven-born soul. There is given unto the regenerate "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God ; the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, that they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints'." Now the heinous nature of transgression begins to appear ; and the discovery excites awakened sinners to endeavour, in the strength of God, to free themselves from its usurped dominion, and to pursue with ardour that course of righteousness for which their souls have acquired a relish. Faith is vouchsafed, which assures them of Christ's ability to save ; and, relying with an unshaken trust in his merits, they obtain redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of their sins, and all other benefits of his passion'. And finally, by an intimate union with Jesus, they draw from his fulness continued supplies of grace, which enable them to maintain the spiritual life on which they have entered, and to discharge its proper functions. And thus they daily advance in wisdom and virtue, till death transports them to the abodes of bliss, where they serve God perfectly, in the full exercise of their renewed faculties. "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee ; in whose heart are thy ways. They will go from strength to strength, and unto the God of gods appeareth every one of them in Sion'."

5. It is directly contrary to the express affirmations of Scripture, to imagine that they, who have been truly regenerated, can ever totally lose that gracious state. Though they are subject to frailties and infirmities so long as they live in this world, yet

' Eph. i. 17, 18. ' ib. i. 6, 7. ' Psalm lxxxiv. 5, 7.

are they not liable to spiritual death any more, or to such an habitual practice of sinning as would extinguish this heavenly life. The perpetuity of regeneration in the Faithful is maintained by the apostle John, when he says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God^a." The reason which he assigns, is the same that another Apostle gives; the permanent and incorruptible nature of the word, which is the holy seed of God, that liveth and abideth for ever^u.

6. We can neither fully conceive nor express the happiness which attaches to a regenerate state; "for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him^x." Yet the Scripture speaks of that felicity in such animated terms as are calculated to excite our most ardent desires after it. When the redeemed arrive in heaven, for the enjoyment of which they are fitted by regeneration, they are "clothed with white robes, and have palms (of victory) in their hands. They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes^{xx}."

Now, wherever those holy dispositions exist, which the grace of God produces in the heart, there is a capacity for the sublime pleasures of heaven. Those

^a 1 John iii. 9.

^u 1 Pet. i. 23.

^x 1 Cor. ii. 9.

^{xx} Rev. vii. 15—17.

happy persons, whose affections are renewed, and set on things above, are adopted into the family of God; they bear the lovely image of the Divine nature which is reflected in their lives; they are sealed by the Holy Spirit, in order that they might be the exclusive property of God; they are favoured with the approving smile of their heavenly Father, who conducts them safely through this life, to his holy habitation above. But the glory which awaits them in a future state is above all description: there, rejoicing eternally in the sunshine of God's beatifying presence, the full measure of their promised happiness will be completed. Besides a total exemption from pain, sorrow, disease, death, and all the imperfections of the present state, they will be satisfied with the enjoyment of their spiritual desires. There, they will attain higher degrees of perfection in holiness;—there, beholding the ineffable glory of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, to whom they are indebted for their salvation, they will, with all the redeemed people of God, possess a source of unmixed felicity, as satisfying as it is eternal. “The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

“How supremely blessed, then, are those truly noble souls, whose privilege it is to be thus born again, and to be admitted into the choirs of holy angels, and to be clothed with those glorious robes which are whiter than snow! They will follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; and he will lead them to the crystal streams, and to the fountain of eternal life itself.”

† Isa. xxxv. 10. † Archbp. Leighton's Works, vol. iv. p. 173.

7. But a regenerate state is necessary to qualify men for a participation of such blessedness. Our Lord's solemn and repeated declaration to Nicodemus shews the necessity of regeneration for all who would enter heaven : " Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God^a." Now, as the proposition contained in these words is universal, and includes the whole human species, there is no method by which a man can evade its application to himself, unless he can impiously imagine that Christ is mistaken, or that he will lower the demands of his word to suit the inclinations of depraved creatures ;—suppositions as derogatory to his truth and wisdom, as to his justice. " Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away^a."

The most cogent reasons may be offered to prove the absolute necessity of the new birth, to fit men for inheriting the kingdom of God.

8. That affirmation of our Lord Jesus Christ, concerning men's natural depravity, should carry conviction to every heart ; " That which is born of the flesh is flesh^b." Every thought, device, word, and work, which emanates from an unrenewed soul, is corrupt, because of the polluted source from whence it flows^c. For this reason it is positively declared, " that they who are in the flesh cannot please God^d." Indeed, so long as men continue in that depraved state, they are objects of his utmost displeasure. Spiritually dead, and devoid of love and reverence for him, " they are enemies to God by wicked works^e." The Lord is excluded from their thoughts, and all his righteous ways are irksome to them, for want of an

^a John iii. 3.

^a Mat. xxiv. 35.

^b John iii. 6.

^c Mark vii. 21—24.

^d Rom. viii. 8.

^e Col. i. 21.

enlightened understanding to discern their excellence. Further, they have no ability to serve their Maker, or to perform one devout act, from faith and love. They feel no delight in any of the exercises of religion: prayer, thanksgiving for mercies received, abasement of soul under a consciousness of manifold sins, love to the brethren of Christ for his sake, and the cultivation of holy affections, are spiritual duties in which they cannot engage with alacrity; nor can they know any thing of the extent of a Christian's obligations to the Saviour, in delivering him from hell, and raising him to heaven. Persons in this state are obnoxious to Divine wrath, which they can never hope to escape without regeneration. To all such, the words of Christ are especially addressed, "Ye must be born again^f."

9. It is equally obvious, that the holiness of God opposes an insuperable barrier to the happiness of an unregenerate man. God is absolutely and unchangeably righteous. "He is the rock; his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he^g." He must, therefore, always behold sin with utter abhorrence; and we need not wonder that he should express his determination to punish the impenitent according to their demerits. "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day: if he turn not, he will whet his sword: he hath bent his bow, and made it ready; he hath, also, prepared for him the instruments of death: he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors^h."

If, then, unholy persons were to be admitted into heaven, what pleasure could they derive from beholding the presence of a sin-avenging God? Is it

^f John iii. 7.

^g Deut. xxxii. 4.

^h Psalm vii. 11—14.

possible that they could contemplate his justice and purity, without the utmost trepidation? or could the matchless grace and perfections of Jehovah draw forth the admiration of sinful beings, who have so often despised the one, and insulted the other? On the contrary, we may be certain, that the exhibition of such unsullied righteousness would fill them with confusion and horror. The remorse of a guilty conscience, and a lively apprehension of deserved vengeance, would render them a terror to themselves, and constrain them "to say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand¹!"

And what satisfaction would the unhallowed services of unrighteous men afford to a holy God? He is truly pleased with the devout homage of his servants who obey him from principles of love and gratitude; but how could he be gratified in heaven with the forced and insincere worship of those who had dishonoured him through their whole lives? It seems then as impossible, on a view of the rectitude of the Lord of Hosts, for him to take any delight in men whilst they live under the dominion of an unsanctified heart, as it is to reconcile light with darkness, or loyalty with rebellion.

Unrenewed men! "you must be born again," before you can do the will of God, or entertain a filial affection for him; or before he can regard you as dutiful children, and subjects whom he delights to honour.

10. Moreover, the constitution of heaven is such as to exclude the unregenerate from ever sharing its blessedness. Heaven is the habitation of the eternal

¹ Rev. vi. 16, 17.

God, who sanctifies it by his presenceⁱⁱ: for this reason, it is positively declared by him, that "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth¹."

The employments of the glorified state could not afford any happiness to an unregenerate man, were he to be allowed to engage in them: for how could he profitably join in services for which he had no relish or qualification? Those songs of thanksgiving which fill the courts of heaven with rapture, would disgust one who felt himself under no obligations to God for his mercy. Those adorations paid by glorified saints to their great Redeemer, would not accord with his self-justifying notions: for, being ignorant of the infinite demerit of sin, and of the boundless compassion of the Saviour, the heartfelt acknowledgments of beatified souls to Christ would sound harsh and discordant in his ears¹.

Again: the enjoyments of heaven are of such an exalted nature, as to require dispositions suited thereto. "No being can receive gratification from pleasures which it has not a capacity for enjoying. Every species of animals requires a mode of living peculiar to itself. They are quite satisfied with their own food and raiment; but the moment they are removed into another situation, they are uneasy. It is evident, also, that different men have inclinations that are wholly dissimilar. No one is comfortable, unless his own inclinations be gratified; and every man feels surprise that others can receive pleasure from that which is disquieting or offensive to himself."

Upon the same principle, an unregenerate man would not be happy, if he were to be translated to heaven. He could derive no gratification from cele-

ⁱⁱ Isa. lvii. 15. ¹ Rev. xxi. 27. ¹ ib. v. 9.

tial pleasures, for want of a spiritual taste to render them palatable. His unholy dispositions would embitter the felicities of that blessed state, and turn its satisfying joys into an occasion of sorrow and lamentation to his soul. All, then, who would be "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in lightⁿ," must pray that their hearts may be "renewed in righteousness and true holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lordⁿ."

11. Nor is it likely that the society of heaven would be more agreeable to an unregenerate man, than the worship in which they engage. If in this life the wicked and carnal feel the presence of good men a restraint from which they are glad to be freed, and their conduct a reproach too hard to be borne, how much would this dislike be increased by a sight of the blessed God, and of Christ, and of the angels who excel in holiness? A contemplation of beings so perfectly wise and good, would at once render sinners completely miserable, by manifesting their own guilt and defilement. These considerations decidedly prove the necessity of regeneration, to prepare men for God's service here, and for the endless fruition of his glory hereafter.

12. The eternal sorrow which they will endure, who die without the new birth unto righteousness, should stimulate all to seek it, as a blessing necessary to their happiness, in life, death, and through all eternity. Does Christ, the infallible Judge of angels and of men, declare, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God?" How awful, then, is the condition of the unregenerate! Even now, as unbelievers, the wrath of God abideth continually on them^p. But how deplorable will their

^p Col. i. 12. ^p Heb. xii. 14. ^p John iii. 3. ^p ib. 18. 36.

condition be, when the sentence of the violated law shall be executed against them ! Then the avenging angel will “ cast the unregenerate into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth^a ;” for it is the unalterable purpose of heaven, that “ the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people who forget God^r. ” Who can fully describe the intense sufferings which unrenewed men will endure in being expelled from paradise ? Is it not dreadful to be deprived of an everlasting existence in a state which affords the most satisfying bliss ? Is it not dreadful to be obliged to exchange the smiles of God, and the communion of angels and happy spirits, for the society of devils and wicked beings, confirmed in hatred to the righteous government of the Lord ? Is it not dreadful to endure the everlasting wrath of God, incensed against their crimes ? Is it not dreadful to lose possession of the joy and peace of the elect ; and to have their breasts filled with malignant passions, and pierced with unutterable anguish, by the reflection of having foolishly sacrificed endless felicity, for the gratification of “ the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season^s ? ”

13. You, then, O unregenerate souls ! who are strangers to the divine life, think of the danger to which you are now exposed, and of the irreparable loss which you will hereafter sustain, if you die without a total renovation of your nature. If you acquire not “ a clean heart, and a right spirit^t, ” you must forego the crown of glory, to inherit “ shame and everlasting contempt^u. ”

Let, then, your natural desire of happiness prompt you to seek the blessing with all due earnestness of

^a Mat. xxv. 30.

^r Psalm xi. 17.

^s Heb. ix. 25.

^t Psalm li. 10.

^u Dan. xii. 2.

mind. It is indeed the province of God to change the heart, and turn the wrong current of the affections; yet it must not be forgotten, that his Spirit generally performs the work by the use of instruments and means prescribed by himself. A sense of your inability to renew your own souls should produce the same effect upon you, as incapacity to accomplish a desirable object would in any other case; namely, induce you to solicit help from those who are able to assist you.

Implore, then, most sincerely, the blessing from the Lord, who is ready to bestow it on them who seek it with all their heart^u. Beg of Him to instruct you in the spiritual nature of regeneration, and to make you solicitous to obtain it; that, being renewed in the spirit of your mind, "you may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God^v;" and thus be prepared to dwell in his blessed kingdom for ever and ever.

^u Jer. xxix. 13.

^v Rom. xii. 1, 2.

LECTURE XXI.

ON THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF REPENTANCE.

Luke xiii. 3. *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

JOHN the Baptist, the precursor of Christ, who came "to prepare his way before him, and to make his paths straight," was commissioned by God to preach "repentance for the remission of sins^a." And when our Saviour appeared as the light and instructor of the world, he began his Divine mission by declaring, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Gospel^b." During the whole course of his ministry, he strongly insisted on the necessity of "that godly

^a Luke iii. 3, 4.

^b Mark i. 14, 15.

sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation^c." And in his farewell address to his Apostles, just before his ascension, they were directed "to preach repentance and remission of sins in his name, among all nations^d." A doctrine sanctioned and enforced by such high authority must be of the greatest consequence to mankind; and, therefore, is deserving of the utmost attention.

To place the subject in a clearer light, it will be requisite to contrast a true with a false repentance; that, by an impartial examination of ourselves, we may be able to determine, whether we have obtained "repentance unto life^e," or continue, to this moment, impenitent and unbelieving. Such an examination is by no means unnecessary, when we see what light and mistaken notions prevail respecting this Christian doctrine, and how easily many, who are totally ignorant of its nature, flatter themselves they have experienced it.

True evangelical repentance, however, may be as clearly distinguished from all those false appearances which faintly resemble it, as the genuine coin of the realm may be discriminated from that which is spurious; the mere counterfeit being, in both instances, destitute of the intrinsic qualities which are essential to that which it imitates.

1. False repentance springs entirely from a dread of punishment. When conscience begins to accuse a sinner, and to terrify him with impending destruction; and when he hears the word of God, saying, "The wages of thy sin is death;" he will sometimes feel much distress, shed many tears, make resolutions and promises of amendment, and, for a short time, renounce the sin which has been the cause of

^c Cor. vii. 10.

^d Luke xxiv. 47.

^e Acts xi. 18.

so much fear and pain. But no sooner is the storm over, which raised these apprehensions of wrath, than the false penitent is easy, and again works iniquity with greediness, till some fresh alarm revives his fears, which again produce the same effects. In this way, many sin, and repent, till their hypocrisy receives its just reward. Thus Pharaoh was apparently softened, whilst the vengeance of God was ready to fall upon his head; but the moment the threatened judgments were suspended, he hardened his heart, and acted more daringly than before¹.

True repentance, though often accompanied by terror, always issues in real conversion to God. Many sincere penitents, whose life and conduct have been most exemplary after their conversion to God, have first cried for mercy, like the jailor at Philippi for fear of being lost for ever. It is not safe, then, to conclude that you have not taken one right step in the road to heaven, because you have turned to God from fear of deserved wrath: let it only excite you to pray, that checks of conscience, and reformation from mere self-love, which are no certain proof of genuine repentance, may terminate in what unquestionably are. The certain marks and signs of true repentance are, an unreserved and sincere confession of sin, humility on account of it, and unfeigned sorrow for it; a deep and lasting hatred to sin, total abandonment of it, and a desire to make full restitution to those whom our iniquities have injured from an abiding conviction of the dishonour which they have done to God, and from a consciousness that, before we turned to him, the ruling tempers of our hearts have been base and detestable.

The humble penitent, when he "remembers his

¹ Exod. ix. 34.

own evil ways, and his doings which have not been good, loathes himself, in his own sight, for his iniquities and abominations^g." His language will be this: "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned: mine iniquities are gone over my head as an heavy burden; they are too heavy for me. Deliver me from all my transgressions, and let not my sins have dominion over me^h!" Here is a deep hatred of all sin, and a real grief of soul for having committed it: here is a desire that no lust should be spared, though dear as a right eye.

We see, then, a striking "difference between the restraints of fear, and casting away sin, because compelled for a season by the lashes of a guilty conscience; and loathing ourselves for what we have done, and the very temptations and motives with which we so vilely and readily complied;—between a mere regard to our own safety, and ardent fixed desires to conquer corruption in every shape, and live for God alone."

2. False repentance seeks relief from its fears, and builds its hopes on better obedience, whilst it distrusts the mercy of God.

The law of God challenges the obedience of a false penitent, and loudly condemns his transgressions. Conscience concurs with the precept and sentence of the violated law. In order, therefore, to pacify conscience, satisfy the law, and lay a good foundation, as he thinks, of hope, he makes resolutions and promises of amendment, attempts to live more religiously, submits to penances and austerities, and forms a variety of self-righteous schemes: but his palpable defects in all these things still subject him

^g Ezek. xxxvi. 31: ^h Psalm xxxviii. 4.

to slavish fears, which again excite him to new endeavours. But all this time he is without saving faith; and, therefore, though a door of hope is opened for sinners of the worst description, he does not enter: though pardon and salvation are offered, without money and without price, through Christ, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, unbelief prevents him from accepting it. Thus, though a false penitent may use the name of Christ in prayer, yet he dare not confide in his sacrifice for eternal life: notwithstanding the strength of his convictions, he still seeks righteousness by his works; he still has a secret hope, that his sorrow, if it were but more sincere, his reformation, if more exemplary, and his performance of duties, if more exact, would recommend him to the favour of God more than Christ's merits can, and prove a better security against punishment.

The nature of true repentance is in every respect different. A true penitent approaches his much-injured Maker, feeling his desert of eternal rejection; but he comes before a mercy-seat. He confesses, that were God to mark iniquity, he could not stand before him; yet he remembers "there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared, and plenteous redemption." He looks to the blood of Christ alone, to cleanse his soul, and take away the curse due to his great offences. "Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin; purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow¹." This hope of mercy embitters to him all his sins, makes him loathe them, and cry for deliverance.

Have I, saith the true penitent, sinned against the goodness of God? Is sin so heinous, that an

¹ Psalm. li. 2—8.

atonement for it could only be made by Christ, the righteous one? How wicked, then, must I appear in his eyes! My offences have greatly dishonoured God, and brought Christ under the agonies of an accursed death; and shall I take pleasure in them again? It is high time for me to cast away every iniquity, and to live in obedience to God.

“How plain is the opposition here, between flying from God in fear, like Adam after his fall, and an humble self-condemning approach to him, like the prodigal son to his Father!—between proud, though earnest attempts to obtain favour with God by newness of life, and dependence for pardon on the blood of Christ alone!—between distresses from regard to personal safety, and grief and shame for sin, as the greatest evil in the world, and the basest return to God and Christ!”

3. False repentance manifests aversion to God and the strictness of his holy law. Those terrors which awakened sinners feel, arise from lively apprehensions of God's justice. They know they have greatly provoked him, and, therefore, want some covert from his wrath; and, having some idea both of his holiness and power, he appears an insupportable enemy. They desire, therefore, to be at peace with him, lest the quarrel should end in their everlasting destruction. Upon this account, they resolve to obey him as slaves do a tyrannical master, though their inclination be directly contrary to their work. Thus, were the penalty of the law removed, they would presently return to their old course with delight.ⁱⁱ

“The true penitent, on the contrary, sees great excellency in obedience, and strives, for this reason, to

ⁱⁱ 2 Pet. ii. 22.

obey with all exactness. He grieves, not because the law is so strict, or its penalty so terrible, (for he esteems "the law to be holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good"^m;) but that he is carnal, sold under sin; that, from a nature opposite in its bent to God, he can make no better progress in his ways and service. He breathes earnestly after holiness, esteeming it no less a blessing than deliverance from condemnation: he does not desire the law shall bend to his corruptions, but that his heart should become fully subject to it. To partake of the redemption that is in Jesus, to make a progress in conquering every vile affection, and to live in communion with God, is the whole wish of his soul."

4. False repentance is temporary in its nature and effects. There are many instances of persons who, for a time, appear very sorrowful for their sins, and yet they return to them with greediness: as soon as the alarming convictions, which first attended them, subside, they relapse into their former evil courses. Thus, the seed which fell by the way-side, upon a rock, and among thorns, was soon blasted and destroyed¹. Thus, Herod heard John the Baptist gladly, and did many things; but his convictions soon wore off, and he became as depraved as ever. And thus false repentance is transient "as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away"ⁿ.

Some try to quiet their consciences, by reflecting upon the distress they once were in for their transgressions; and take comfort from a view of their partial reformation of manners, and formal course of religious duties. This causes them to become lukewarm and secure. Some of this character will ever

^m Rom. vii. 12.

¹ Mat. xiii. 3—8.

ⁿ Hosea vi. 4.

boast of their experience, and the joy which they falsely imagine they have had in God, whilst they are unhumbled for their manifold corruptions, imperfect duties, and numerous failings. Hence their prayers are presented to Heaven in a cold unbelieving spirit, without expecting an answer; the great things of God's law are but mean in their eyes; and their whole scheme of religion is reduced to a lifeless form, hateful to God, and unprofitable to themselves.

True repentance, on the contrary, is always attended with a lasting abasement of soul before God, on account of remaining corruptions, and a view of the Lord's perfect goodness. When a penitent looks back, and reflects what he has been, and duly considers his present state of mind, he "is filled with confusion," and renews his confession and sorrow. He can recollect many instances of transgression in his past life, which once either escaped his notice, or caused him no pain and remorse: and, now that he is awakened to perceive the high demerit of sin, he discovers such frequent workings of a carnal, worldly, unbelieving spirit; so little love to God or man; such a taint of pollution on his mind, which exposes him to envy, pride, anger, impurity, and discontent, though his fellow-creatures see it not, that he often groans under the burden of his evil nature, saying, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" When he beholds, too, the unspotted holiness of God shining through his law, the dispensations of his providence and grace, he breaks out with Isaiah, and says, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the

King, the Lord of Hosts^o." Though he hath obtained peace with God, he cannot forget his past sins; yea, the enjoyment of so high a favour makes "the remembrance of his offences much more grievous, the burden still more intolerable." Sorrow and shame for iniquity he will continually feel, till "death gives him a full discharge from this warfare."

5. False repentance effects only a slight and partial reformation in the outward behaviour. Distress of conscience sometimes produces an apparent reformation of manners, and a dread of some presumptuous offence, which has made the false penitent smart so severely. But, in this case, the sinner's passions are only chained up, and he deterred, by an external cause, from living after the desire of his heart. Thus, as some gross offence generally excites that fear which is the spring of false contrition, so deliverance from its dominion too frequently satisfies the hypocrite, without any real change, or lasting or universal amendment.

Sometimes the false penitent will convict himself of insincerity, by changing one offence for another less vicious. If he give up for a time his favourite lust, he will commit some other sin with little compunction; or, if he is zealous for the ceremonies and forms of religion, who was once profane, he will live in strife, injustice, and uncharitableness: if he contend for the truth of the Gospel, he will still love the world, and its foolish pleasures, more than the peace of God. Whilst he retains the form of godliness, he feels not its power; and is prone, like the Laodiceans, to be perfectly satisfied with himself, though destitute of every temper acceptable to God^p.

^o Isa. vi. 5.

^p Rev. iii. 15—20.

The character of a true penitent is directly opposite to this. He finds, indeed, continual cause to confess and lament his imperfections, and to seek renewed pardon in the blood of Christ: but, though he has not yet attained that measure of perfection after which he aspires, yet he watches and strives against all iniquity, and labours to be conformed to the image of God. He cannot be contented with freedom from presumptuous transgressions; he desires that all the graces of the Holy Spirit may live and flourish in his heart. He cannot feel happy without cultivating faith, love, purity, humility, meekness, charity, patience, and resignation to the Divine will. The seeds of these heavenly virtues are sown in his soul; and he constantly uses means to promote their growth and increase, day by day. Conscious of the desperate wickedness and deceit of his heart, he prays to be kept from falling, by the power of Jehovah: "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe^{pp}." "O that my ways were made so direct, that I might keep thy law^q!"

6. False repentance yields to the fear of man. Many set out a little way in the road to heaven, till "the love of the praise of men," and the dread of their contempt^r, conquers them; and they turn back, and walk no more with Christ^s. Their object is, at all events, to please their relations, or worldly persons who can advance their interest: they will, therefore, do nothing, to honour God, which may cause them to forfeit the favour of those from whom they hope to gain.

True repentance leads us to forsake all, and to follow Christ, whatever may be the consequence of our attachment to him: it bears a penitent through evil

^{pp} Psalm cxix. 117.

^q ib. 5.

^r John xii. 42, 43.

^s John vi. 66.

report; and makes him satisfied with the approbation of God, let men form what opinion they please concerning him. Ashamed of his past conduct, and resolved, from love to God, to do his will, he carefully avoids every snare and occasion which would again plunge him into sin. He cannot, therefore, any longer comply with evil customs, or call those things harmless which may tempt him to affront his God, divert his thoughts from eternal realities, and inflame those passions which true wisdom requires men to suppress. "For conscience sake, therefore, he will risk the loss of temporal advantages, and resist the entreaties and bear the frowns of relations and friends sooner than be seduced from his duty to God. He will maintain a vigilant jealousy over sin, and all approaches to it. He will walk with great circumspection in regard to all persons and things, lest they should obstruct him in his pilgrimage. It is his steadfast purpose, lose or suffer what he may, never to yield to popular errors, or the fashion of neglecting the soul, but to repel every insinuating advocate for conformity to evil customs, saying, "Depart from me, ye wicked; I will keep the commandments of my God."

Thus, then, in opposition to the slavish fear from which false sorrow for sin proceeds, that sincere evangelical repentance which God approves, is, a radical alteration of the mind, will, and affections, which displays itself in unfeigned grief for sin, a fixed resolution to forsake all unrighteousness, and to pursue every Christian virtue and grace.

By comparing our spirit and conduct with the test afforded in the preceding pages, we may see whether we are penitent before God, or whether we yet re-

main impenitent, under the sway of a hard unbelieving heart and corrupt affections; whether we are subjects of that hypocritical fear, and sorrow which worketh death; or partakers of that blessed change of heart and life, to which we are brought by a real repentance".

7. The importance of repentance, and the blessedness which results from it, recommend it to all who feel any wish to enter into the kingdom of God. Repentance rescues men from the cruel and oppressive tyranny of Satan, breaks the chains of sin with which they have been fettered, effects their liberation from the grievous bondage of evil passions, infuses the love of righteousness, and translates them into God's kingdom of grace on earth, and of glory in heaven. Here is a work worthy of God to effect, and suited to the spiritual wants of perishing sinners, for whose benefit it is wrought.

The blessings which accrue from a penitent state deserve to be briefly mentioned. "The wages of sin is death;" to which the impenitent soul is obnoxious, but which God will not inflict on the contrite. Repentant souls not only escape deserved wrath, but obtain a plenary remission of all past iniquities. God vouchsafes his peace, as a token to assure them of forgiveness and reconciliation. He bestows upon them all the treasures of grace and salvation. "He seals them, as his unalienable property, with the Holy Spirit of promise;" makes them acquainted with their adoption into the family of God; and gives them a foretaste of the glory prepared for them in heaven.

Now, what delight must a returning prodigal experience, in knowing that he is reconciled to his

Heavenly Father, who henceforth feels a pleasure in doing good to his long-lost son !

And, with what satisfaction must the blessed God contemplate the recovery of his once-lost children to duty and to happiness ! He is gratified with their repentance, as his own work ; because it produces those tempers which fit them for communion with himself. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word^u." On the restoration of every sinner to a state of righteousness, God evinces the liveliest demonstrations of joy ; saying, "This my son was dead, and is alive again ; was lost, and is found."

Angels participate in the same high gratification : they carry back to heaven, with a most rapturous delight, the glad tidings of a sinner's conversion ; and, tuning their golden harps, raise a song of thanksgiving to God, the author of such transcendent mercy. Nor is it difficult to account for this joy. For what do angels behold, when they witness the return of a prodigal to God ? They see in him a rebel reduced to allegiance ; a creature, once miserably enslaved by the powers of darkness, liberated from a grievous captivity, and plucked as a brand from the "everlasting burnings." they see another trophy of victorious grace ; a fresh triumph of the cross of Christ ; another proof of God's compassion, in exalting him who was before sunk in guilt and disgrace, to share with themselves all the beatitude and felicity of heaven. And is there not, in this, sufficient matter for exultation ? Is not this a cause strong enough to excite "joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth^v ?"

^u Isa. lxvi. 2.

^v Luke xv. 10.

8. Convincing arguments may be adduced to establish the necessity of repentance.

First, Your natural depravity renders it expedient. Your hearts are contaminated with sin ; and from this poisoned source, all those corrupt imaginations and inclinations, in which you delight, proceed ; and these have led you into the many acts of disobedience, by which you have so long provoked and dishonoured God. Is it not then essential to your peace with him, that you should repent in dust and ashes ; that you should have “ a new heart, and a right spirit,” by which you will be fitted to possess “ an inheritance among all them that are sanctified by faith in Christ^{*} ?”

Secondly, The approach of the day of judgment places the importance of a penitent state in the strongest light imaginable. “ God commandeth all men everywhere to repent ; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead^y. ” Is it possible, that, without a timely repentance, impenitent men, covered with guilt, should be able to abide the scrutiny of that tremendous hour which “ will bring to light the hidden things of darkness ?” The word of truth forbids the supposition ; by declaring, “ The wicked shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous^z. ” “ The soul that sinneth, it shall die^a. ” “ Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish^{aa}. ”

Thirdly, The nature of God and the heavenly world concur in proclaiming the necessity of repent-

^{*} Acts xxvi. 18.

^y ib. xvii. 30, 31.

^z Psalm i. 5.

^a Ezek. xviii. 4.

^{aa} Luke xiii. 3.

ance. Can a Being of such holiness and excellence as the King of Glory, look with complacency on revolted subjects, who have insulted his authority, and defied his wrath? Before creatures so rebellious can be restored to God's favour, they must freely confess their crimes, and renounce their sins; which is the least offering they can present to his offended justice.

On the other hand, creatures filled with enmity to God, and aversion to righteousness, could not be happy, if they were admitted into heaven without previously repenting of their misdeeds. What pleasure could the drunkard, the sensualist, the covetous, the worldling, and all who live ungodly, derive either from the bliss or the society of heaven? Their distaste for enjoyments so purely spiritual would utterly disqualify them for such exalted happiness; and the sight of God and his holy angels, instead of affording pleasure, would confound them.

The destruction of impenitent transgressors is inevitable, so long as God remains unalterably just to fulfil his denunciations against them: and of this we have, from his own lips, the most positive assurance, when he says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away^b."

Whither, then, O obdurate souls! will you fly for safety? There is no retreat for you, but in the hope of annihilation; and that is only the preposterous dream of infidels. If you repent not, you will "awake, when the trumpet shall sound to judgment, to shame and everlasting contempt^c." And can you endure the thought of being banished for ever from the enjoyment of God? And will it be no cause of sorrow, to lie down in endless torments, with every reflection suited to aggravate, and not assuage, your woe?

^b Mat. xxiv. 35.

^c Dan. xi. 2.

9. The expediency of repentance is built on a foundation that cannot be shaken ; and I trust that the reasons which have been given in proof of it will not only excite in you a desire, but call forth your most sincere endeavours, to obtain it. The destruction, from which, through the grace of God and the atonement of Christ, it saves you, and the blessedness for which it qualifies you, powerfully invite you to seek it. Be, then, on your guard, against deception in this business. Rest not in a presumptuous belief of your having already repented: for this will stop further inquiry, and throw a serious impediment in the way of your obtaining it.

Nor substitute for true repentance, that semblance of it with which too many are contented. The contrition of self-righteous and formal professors of the Gospel consists in an insincere and transient grief, and in an attention to the mere ceremonies of religion, without any devotion of soul ; in submitting to voluntary austerity, penance, and mortification, without that inward and godly sorrow which invariably accompanies real penitence. But will such a flimsy covering hide the impurity and deceit of a guilty heart, from the eye of an omniscient God ? No ! the mask will soon drop off ; and then the native deformity of a deceiver will be visible :—and then the question will receive a direct answer, “What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul^d ?”

That repentance which is unto salvation, as we have already declared, is different, both in its nature and effects, from false contrition. It is the work of God to convert and change and subdue the heart of man, which is proof against every dictate of con-

^d Job xxvii. 8.

science and reason, inviting it to return to an offended God. But when Jehovah speaks to the soul, by his Spirit working in it, its obstinacy, and unbelief, and rebellion, and thirst after sin, are conquered; and then it can relent, and shew its detestation of sin, and delight in those righteous ways which were once irksome and hateful to it.

Do you feel your heart to be hard and impenitent; incapable, by its own resources, of turning to the Lord, and of "bringing forth fruits meet for repentance?" Then betake yourselves to God; whose grace smites the rocky heart, and causes it to emit streams of genuine sorrow for iniquity, which is an offering acceptable to him. "The sacrifices of God are, a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God! thou wilt not despise."

And when once the soul is made capable, by the grace of repentance, of intercourse with God, what pleasures spring up in it, to which it was before an entire stranger! "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding," and a sweet earnest of glory, and a hope of heaven, dwell therein; to console it in affliction, to animate it in its endeavours after holiness, and to assure it, that its pious endeavours shall not "be in vain in the Lord." The happiness to which it introduces us on earth, and for which, through the Spirit of Christ, it prepares us in heaven, should make us pray, "Lord, grant us repentance unto life, by creating in us a clean heart and a right spirit!"

But is any impenitent sinner satisfied with his present state, and ready to ask, What need have I to repent and alter my conduct? Then let his whole life pass in review before him. Let him recollect all that he has done, from the moment he was capable of

thinking and acting, down to this hour. What ingratitude to God for mercies received! What determined opposition to the Divine will! What dislike to the government and ways of God! How numberless the sins which he has committed against the Divine Majesty, whereby he has justly provoked his wrath and indignation! Add to increase the guilt of his offences, let him remember that they have been perpetrated amidst expostulations, warnings, and the most pathetic entreaties and persuasions.

Such a retrospect will suggest abundant matter for thankfulness. Whilst it will amply prove his need of repentance, it will teach him to ascribe his existence, and escape from torment, to the forbearance of God; but for which, he would long since have been cut down as fuel, for the devouring "fire which cannot be quenched".

Abuse not the patience of God for another moment, "lest he should swear in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest".

The grace of repentance lies within your reach, if you will but stretch forth the hand of faith to receive it from Christ, "whom God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance and remission of sins."

Jesus invites your approach unto him: "Look unto me, and be ye saved! for I am God, and beside me there is no Saviour¹." Lay open your inmost soul to the influences of his Spirit, and beseech him both to wound and to heal you. "He will be very gracious unto thee, at the voice of thy cry: when he shall hear it, he will answer thee".

^{*} Mat. iii. 12.

^b Heb. iii. 11.

¹ Isa. xlv. 21, 22.

^a Isa. xxx. 19.

LECTURE XXII.

ON THE PARDON OF SIN.

Micah vii. 18, 19. *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*

PARDON of sin is a blessing of superlative value, because it is so necessary to our peace and salvation. Without it no man can be happy. We have been guilty of treason against God: and being unable to make the least atonement for our offences, unless we obtain forgiveness we must endure the awful severity of his justice, in endless woe. When the conscience of a sinner is wounded with guilt, and oppressed with fears of Divine wrath, pardon is sought with the utmost anxiety, as the only thing which can give it ease; and it is received with joy, as the greatest of all favours.

Adored be the love of our heavenly Father! He has contrived a way, in which, in full consistency with his glorious perfections, he can shew mercy to the vilest rebels, who unfeignedly repent of their transgressions*.

But, had not the Gospel made this rich discovery, mankind must have laboured under a painful uncertainty, whether there was "forgiveness with God." Though conscious of guilt, the mere light of reason could never have clearly taught them that he would not finally condemn all his offending creatures. But whether such as had rebelled against their Sovereign

* Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Rom. iii. 23—27; &

might be pardoned without impeaching his honour, as a righteous governor; this was a point too difficult to be solved, without an especial revelation from heaven.

How great, then, are the obligations under which we are laid to admire the goodness of the Lord, who has not left us to form a thousand wild conjectures about an affair of such vast importance! for, in the word of his grace, we are assured, by a Divine voice, that "there is mercy with God, and plentiful redemption^b."

His intention to forgive the penitent was known to Adam and the Patriarchs. It was exhibited, in a striking manner, under the sacrifices offered by the Law. The pardoning goodness of Jehovah was loudly declared to Moses in the wilderness: "And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin^c." But, by the incarnation and death of Christ, the doctrine has received the highest confirmation, and shines forth, to the full view of all, in unclouded glory and beauty. Yes, "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him^d."

Pardon amongst men ordinarily signifies the remission of a trespass—in law, the forgiving of a felony, or treasonable offence committed against the king: but, as exercised by the Eternal Majesty of Heaven towards a repentant sinner, it implies not merely the forgiveness of his unnumbered sins, however heinous or provoking they may have been, but also

^b Psalm cxxx. 7. ^c Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. ^d Dan. ix. 9.

adoption into the family of God, a title for heaven, and an earnest of it, which will be hereafter crowned with the possession of endless joy. To assure him of the reality of this mercy, God imparts to him the Holy Spirit, sheds his paternal love abroad in his soul, and vouchsafes that celestial peace which keeps his heart and mind by Jesus Christ^{dd}.

To inspire a contrite soul with full confidence in his mercy, God employs the strongest metaphors, and the richest variety of language; yet all in exact correspondence to the different views which the Scriptures give of the dreadful and complicated evil of sin.

Sin, as to its effects upon the mind, is not unfitly compared to the leprosy and the plague; and the sinner is described as being so defiled and corrupted by it, as to resemble a putrid body^e. To shew the efficacy of the remedy, his pardon, through the blood of Christ, is denoted by the cleansing and washing away of his filth^f. The transgressor is likened to a wretched insolvent; and his offences, to a debt of ten thousand talents^g. His forgiveness is represented by blotting out his sins, or not imputing them unto him^h. Is the sinner compared to a person burthened with a load which is insupportable to his soul?—then his pardon is called rest, and a removal of the painful encumbranceⁱ. Are his trespasses, on account of their number and effects, said to resemble black, lowering, portentous clouds, which are ready to burst and deluge the country?—his forgiveness is styled a total abolition, or blotting them out from the face of

^{dd} Rom. v. 1—6.

^e Isa. i. 5, 6.

^f Psalm xxxii. 1. 1 John i. 7. Rev. i. 5.

^g Mat. xviii. 24.

^h Psalm xxxii. 2.

ⁱ Psalm xxxviii. 4. Mat. xi. 28.

Heaven, so that not a vestige of them shall be left behind, nor any one be able to tell what is become of them¹. Is a contempt and violation of the Divine Law pronounced rebellion against the Majesty of Heaven, and the offender regarded as a convict under sentence of death? His pardon reverses the sentence, and remits the penalty due to his crimes; “yea, the Lord is gracious to him, and saith, Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom for him².”

Thus pardon appears to be a Divine favour, that carries in its train every thing suited to the wants of a contrite sinner. It makes the poor in spirit immensely rich, the miserable happy, the dejected joyful, the fearful courageous to fight the battles of the Lord: in short, the grace which accompanies it, purifies the heart, and qualifies it for the sublimest intercourse with God, and angels, and holy spirits.

There are some leading features in the pardoning mercy of God, which invite particular attention. It is complete, free and undeserved, and everlasting.

1. It is complete. If forgiveness did not include all sins, be they ever so numerous, and extend to all their aggravations, however enormous, it would not be equal to the necessities of a sinner. Each sin being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and subjecting the offender to an awful curse, it is obvious, that if the punishment due to every sin be not remitted, the wrath of Heaven must be our portion. From hence, a full pardon appears necessary to secure our happiness; and accordingly it is granted.

The Scriptures affirm, that when God vouchsafes a pardon to any of the sons of men, he liberally forgives all their trespasses, though as many in number

¹ Isa. xliv. 22.

² Job xxxiii. 24.

of Christ possesses such resistless efficacy, arising from the dignity of him who shed it, that it is able to "cleanse us from all sin".

2. Another excellence which distinguishes this pardon, is, that it is free and undeserved. It is not granted on condition of any obedience to be performed by us; for we receive it freely, "without money and without price." Yet it is a fact, which the redeemed of the Lord must never forget, that their surety, Christ, was obliged to submit to the most dreadful conditions, to obtain their pardon. Nothing short of his perfect fulfilment of the broken law, of his subjection to the most infamous death of the cross, could reconcile the affronted Majesty of Heaven to his rebellious creatures; nothing but the sacrifice of his own life could satisfy the rigid demands of justice, or atone for the smallest transgression. God has affirmed it, as an unalterable truth, "that without shedding of blood, there is no remission" of sin. The atonement of our adorable High Priest is the only thing which can answer the claims of Divine justice, purchase the forgiveness of sin, and soothe and heal the conscience when smarting under the anguish of a sense of guilt.

"This was compassion like a God,
That, when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew."

This pardon is, nevertheless, entirely free to the real penitent. It is dispensed in a sovereign manner, according to the riches of Divine mercy. As it is written, "We have all sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus".

* 1 John i. 7.

* Heb. ix. 22.

** Rom. iii. 23, 24.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace¹." The sufferings of Christ are the meritorious cause of pardon, and his own glory is the ultimate end which God proposes to himself, when he bestows this distinguishing blessing. "God, (saith the Apostle) for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you²." "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins³."

"Thus the Divine mercy, disdaining all limits, is overflowing and immeasurable. Sin, indeed, abounds like a flood; but grace like an ocean, to drown the crimes of the most impious soul, that returns, with weeping and supplication, with genuine faith and repentance, unto God. The favour of man is generally backward to interpose, till something amiable and inviting appears in the object. But the grace of God is immensely rich, and infinitely free. It encourages the most vile and hardened rebels to return to their allegiance to God. It brings every requisite and recommendation in its own unspeakably beneficent nature. It accomplishes all its blessed ends, not by any towardly disposition in the sinner, but by that one glorious righteousness provided by the Saviour."

3. This forgiveness is everlasting, which is necessary to crown a complete pardon suited to the condition of guilty creatures; for, if all their trespasses were not entirely forgiven, and that for ever, what sure ground could they have for peace of conscience here? what joyful hope of glory hereafter? Happily, the continuance of a truly contrite soul in a pardoned state does not depend upon the perfection of his

¹ Eph. i. 7.

² ib. iv. 32.

³ Isa. xliii. 25.

own obedience, (for, if it did, he would soon forfeit the blessing, since he is liable to fall every moment,) but on the covenant of God, which secures the perpetuity of the Divine mercy towards its chosen objects. In the perpetual efficacy of Christ's atonement, and the inviolable fidelity of the eternal God, there is all possible security, that a full pardon, once granted, shall be as unalterably fixed as the oath and promise of Jehovah can make it^a.

The word of righteousness fully attests the cheering truth. Thus the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, addresses his Church and people :—"As I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth ; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee^b."

The same doctrine is frequently insisted on by the Royal Psalmist. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile^c." "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Now, as the two opposite points of east and west cannot meet, so it may be fairly concluded, that the sins of the penitent shall never come against him, to his condemnation and punishment. Indeed, the same inspired penman assures us, that "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him^d."

The new covenant guarantees the blessing in the

^a Heb. vi. 13—20.

^b Isa. liv. 9, 10.

^c Psalm xxxii. 1, 2.

^d Psalm ciii. 17.

following joyful declaration:—"I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more^e."

The Prophet Micah thus expresses himself on the subject:—"Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea." When a stone, or any ponderous substance, is thrown into the fathomless deep, it is impossible that all the art or power of man should ever recover it. If, then, this striking image of drowning the transgressions of the pardoned sinner in the ocean of sovereign mercy, does not intimate their entire removal and destruction, it will be difficult to find language that can convey such an idea.

But to represent the absolute nature of that forgiveness which is freely vouchsafed to believers for Christ's sake, God says, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve^f."

Here is a most blessed assurance, that they who are forgiven by God have all their iniquities blotted out for ever. Confident of this soul-animating truth, St. Paul challenged every enemy, and defied the hosts of darkness. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us^g." If those who have been absolved from sin, and acquitted from condemnation, should again come under the curse, and finally perish, then such expressions have no proper meaning^h.

How supremely glorious is that forgiveness which

^e Heb. viii. 12.

^f Jer. i. 20.

^g Rom. viii. 33—39.

^h John x. 27—30. 1 Pet. i. 2—6.

is with God! It has every requisite to make it acceptable to the indigent miserable sinner. The most guilty need not despair of obtaining it, nor the most unworthy be discouraged from applying to the all-merciful God for it, if duly humbled for their multiplied offences against him; especially as his boundless compassion has led him to make a universal tender of pardon to the apostate sons of Adam. He has made a proclamation of mercy, by his Evangelical Herald, which well deserves the attention of rebels, who must die eternally unless they avail themselves of his clemency. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Remonstrating with those who either neglect or despise the proffered blessing, he adds, "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David^a."

4. Did, then, the most abandoned characters know the riches and extent of God's mercy; did they but seriously reflect how his bowels of compassion yearn over them; instead of being held any longer in captivity by Satan, under the fatal persuasion that "there is no hope," they would quickly return to God, that they might experience the tender concern which he feels for their everlasting welfare^{bb}. Come, then, lost and wretched prodigals, and consider with what reluctance God abandons the most obdurate to de-

^a Isa. lv. 1—4.

^{bb} Hosea xi. 8, 9.

served wrath; how affectionately he desires your conversion! and, approaching him with penitence, say, in anticipation of his mercy, "Father, we have sinned against Heaven and before thee;" be gracious unto us, and blot out our misdeeds! Then, instead of reproaching you for your unkindness and ingratitude in deserting him, he will hail your return with the liveliest tokens of joy; and, in accents of paternal love, will exclaim, "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore, my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord¹."

5. Come then, poor, trembling, conscious sinner, and refuse not the consolations of your God! Let us meditate awhile on the riches of his grace, that we may see whether it does not afford you a cheering hope of forgiveness, if you will but come back to him with heartfelt contrition. To answer your objections, let us suppose yours to be the worst of cases. What if your conscience is intolerably oppressed with the number and magnitude of your sins;—what if you are by nature a child of wrath, and by practice the reverse of all that is good;—what if you have violated the Divine law, and incurred its everlasting curse;—what if you have grown hoary in rebellion against God, and think yourself a monster of impiety;—what if your sins of heart and life, sins of omission and commission, sins of ignorance and presumption, sins against light and knowledge, like an armed host in terrible array, besiege you on every side, and cry aloud for vengeance on your guilty head;—what if, to aggravate your misery, Satan should load you with horrid accusations, tempt you to blaspheme,

¹ Jer. xxxi. 18—21.

and insinuate that God has no mercy in store for you, so that you are ready to conclude that you are almost a condemned soul, consigned over to remediless woe;—still your case is not absolutely desperate; even yet there is relief to be found: “Christ is mighty, and able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him^u,” so that, notwithstanding every discouragement, there is no reason for despair.

There is full and free and eternal forgiveness with God, “and he waits to be gracious unto you.” Jehovah invites you to debate the matter with him; in order to shew, that, if you are truly penetrated with sorrow for your sins, your fears of being cast off are utterly unfounded. “Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool^k.” Washed in the atoning blood of Christ, the foulest crimes lose their impurity, and are freely pardoned, through his all-prevailing merits.

Behold, then, ye that are bowed down with the cumbrous load of your sins, who lament “the plague of your own hearts,” “there is balm in Gilead; there is a Physician there^l,” whose skill is fully adequate to the removal of your disease, however inveterate. See! “there is mercy with the Lord, and plenteous redemption.”

Still, methinks, I hear you say, “Though I am ready to admit the truth of these representations, yet I question whether the mercy of God can reach a case so aggravated as mine. Would it not be presumptuous in me to hope for what I do not deserve?”—Know, O sinner, for thy comfort, that pardon is not withheld on account of any peculiar guilt in offenders,

^u Heb. vii. 25.

^k Isa. i. 18.

^l Jer. viii. 22.

nor is it exercised for any merit in the object. Salvation is of free grace; a favour bestowed on the most unworthy, through the redemption of Christ¹¹.

221 Come then, humble, disconsolate soul, and lift up thine eyes to Heaven! Who are those countless myriads of holy spirits that stand before the throne of God, exulting in bliss? They were once polluted by sin, laden with guilt, harassed with fears, and ready to despond; in a word, they were some of them altogether as vile and abominable and wretched as you can possibly be: they were all as wicked by nature, and some of them as bad in practice, as yourself. There is the idolatrous, and cruel, and bloody Manasseh, who was the terror of his country. There is the perfidious Apostle Peter, who basely denied his Divine Master with oaths and execrations. There are several of the depraved Corinthians, who were once a reproach and scandal to human nature. There, too, you may see some of those Jerusalem sinners who imbrued their hands in the blood of the Son of God. "All these, having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," shine conspicuously among the spirits of just men made perfect; the very thought of which should revive the heart of a drooping sinner. In fine, if you examine those multitudes which now inhabit the regions of immortal purity, you will find sinners of every sort and description, who have been made recipients of matchless grace. So that, be your sins more in number than the stars in the firmament, or heavier than the mountains, yet the free forgiveness of a gracious God transcends them all: "For thus saith the Lord, Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto

¹¹ Eph. i. 7.

the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts^m. Let this be your confidence and joy, that God will not the death of a sinner, but that he should repent and live."

6. And, oh! how inexpressibly happy are you, O contrite souls! who are acquainted with the pardoning goodness of your God! Who can fully set forth the joy, and peace, and satisfaction which you experience, in the Scriptural assurance of the remission of your sins—a pardon marked with the seal of God, whose sons ye are, and with whom ye shall reign in life eternal? But, having had many trespasses forgiven you, your love should be great in return. The unutterable sensations of a criminal, who should receive a reprieve from his offended sovereign at the very moment when he was going to be executed, can but feebly represent the feelings of gratitude which should inflame your hearts with affection towards your Redeemer. You were once condemned rebels; and must have endured the awful vengeance of the Divine law, had not Christ died to procure your pardon.

"Go, and sin no more." Let the loving-kindness of God, in forgiving you, work in your souls a deep abhorrence of vice, and a desire to cherish and practise every Christian virtue: and be always ready to compassionate your offending brother; since "God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." Thus, being zealous for the honour of the Lord in this life, let

will ratify your pardon at the great day of reckoning, and award you a "crown of glory that fadeth not away."

LECTURE XXIII.

ON FAITH—ITS FRUITS AND EFFECTS.

Gal. v. 6. *For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.*

HUMAN faith is the giving credence to the report of another, concerning things which a man has seen or heard. Our belief of his statement increases or diminishes, in proportion as the circumstance which he relates to have happened is credible or incredible, and according to the integrity and ability of the person who affirms it.

Upon this kind of faith, arising from the testimony of others, many of the most common and important affairs of life are conducted. The judge is guided in passing the sentence of acquittal or condemnation, by the credit which he attaches to the evidence of competent witnesses. In the same way, we credit the narration of a thousand occurrences, which, on account of distance of time and place, we have no opportunity of being otherwise assured of.

Divine faith is built on higher grounds, even on the express declarations and authority of God in his word. If the knowledge and fidelity of a fallible creature entitle him to belief, how much more the testimony of the infallible God? The hearts of men are so deceitful, that we cannot always repose confidence in their assertions. Besides, their means of obtaining

correct information are often very slender ; and thus they may mislead us, through their own imperfect conceptions of what they represent. These objections cannot apply to God ; who is so unalterably righteous, that he can be under no temptation to falsehood ; and so infinitely wise, as to secure him from the possibility of error. His testimony, therefore, is infallibly true, in the highest sense, and demands the unhesitating assent of every one to whom his truth may come.

1. Real faith, then, as exercised in the testimony of God, is a full, implicit, and hearty belief of the whole of his revealed will contained in the Bible ; such a belief of it, as powerfully affects a man's mind with a lively persuasion of its reality and importance, and constrains him to act agreeably to it. The Apostle Paul represents it "as the substance of things hoped for ; the evidence of things not seen^b."

Faith gives implicit credit to the Divine veracity, with respect to all those things which God attests ; as, the creation of the world, and the fall of man from a state of innocence ; the deluge ; the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ ; the providence of God ; the mediation of Jesus in heaven, his coming hereafter to raise the dead and judge the world, and the doctrine of future eternal rewards and punishments. But more particularly, it regards, embraces, and looks for the blessings which God has promised ; and thus gives the soul a kind of present possession of "things hoped for." The testimony of the Lord, with reference to the blessings of the Gospel, is so cordially received by faith, that it realizes them to the mind,

^b Heb. xi. 1.

with the same certainty as if they were clearly perceptible by the bodily senses.

2. True faith may be easily distinguished from all its counterfeits; whether it be a mere historical assent to Scriptural truth, which does not enlighten the mind and controul the affections; or a notional faith, which, whilst it fills the head with speculative opinions, leaves the soul under the fatal power of corrupt propensities; or a barren, dead, and temporary faith, which, like “the seed sown on stony and thorny ground, bringeth forth no fruit unto perfection^c.”

On the contrary, a genuine faith in Christ is accompanied with a knowledge of our interest in his salvation, implants a relish for Divine things in the soul, enables us to pursue them with vigour and delight, and produces fruit abundantly, to the glory of God.

That faith should thus “turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just^d,” is not surprising, when its high extraction is considered. It is not the produce of nature, but of grace, and “cometh down from the Father of Lights^{dd}.” This gives it all its energy, to sanctify the soul, and make it productive in the fruits of a holy and religious life.

It is true that a candid perusal of the Gospels, and an attentive examination of the facts which they record concerning Christ, may produce a conviction that he is the Messiah, the Saviour of the world; and yet a man may derive little more benefit from this admission, than if he remained an unbeliever in his Divine Mission. Thousands within the pale of the visible Church are convinced of the truth of our most holy religion, by the strength of the evidence which

^c Luke viii. 12—16. ^d Luke i. 17. ^{dd} Eph. iii. 8.

is brought to support it ; and so far all is right : but their belief does not issue in obedience to its precepts, which is the natural effect of a genuine and saving faith*.

3. To produce in our minds that belief which will induce us to delight in the Divine law as the rule of our conduct, is indeed a work which God himself must perform ; since man is so weakened by the Fall, as to be unable, by his own resources, to exercise faith and calling upon God. Indeed, we find it expressly ascribed to him throughout the sacred records. " By grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." " Ye are risen with him (Christ) through the faith of the operation of God^o." " Wherefore, also, we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power^f."

In order to set forth its excellence, it is styled, by an inspired penman, " the faith of God's elect^g."

It is conferred, like other benefits of the Gospel covenant, gratuitously upon all who feel their need of it, and are willing to accept it as the purchase of Christ's death. Conscious that " by nature you are children of wrath^h," solicit this heavenly gift, " without which it is impossible to please God ; for he that cometh to him must believe in his existence, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek himⁱ."

What gives so much importance to faith in the Christian scheme, is the dignity of the character towards whom it is directed, the special office which it discharges, and the blessed effects which it operates on the heart.

* James ii. 17—26.

^g Titus i. 1.

^o Col. ii. 12.

^f Eph. ii. 3.

ⁱ 2 Thess. i. 11.

^h Heb. xi. 6.

Considered, however, abstractedly, there is no more merit in faith, than in any other grace of the Spirit; except as it is appointed of God to be the instrument of uniting believers to Christ, from whose exhaustless fulnessⁱⁱ they receive whatever is necessary to complete their sanctification. Regarded as the boon of heaven, every thing praiseworthy in faith (though God is manifestly pleased with those in whom it is visible) virtually belongs to him, who is the donor of it: so that deliverance from the punishment of sin, victory over the world, and the final possession of eternal life, are exclusively restricted to faith, as the channel through which they flow; in order that it may be evident that salvation, both present and future, “is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who sheweth mercy^k.”

4. Faith, in crediting the Divine records, makes Christ the great object of its exercise; because “God hath set him forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood^{kk},” and because “all the promises” of pardon made to penitent believers, “are in him yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God^l.” Consequently, we are directed “to behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world^m,” and to fix the eye of our souls steadfastly upon him as our leader, whom we should “follow in the regeneration.” In conformity with such commands, faith fixes its expectations on the Saviour, as a Divine Being, altogether lovely in himself, and endeared by the display of marvellous compassion, in submitting to a shameful death for the redemption of mankind. Hence the affection of a soul, which centres its hopes of salva-

ⁱⁱ John i. 16. Col. ii. 9—12.

^k Rom. ix. 16. iv. 16^a

^{kk} Rom. iii. 25.

^l 2 Cor. i. 20.

^m John i. 29.

tion in Christ, is ardent indeed, greatly surpassing the strongest expression of regard which we can pay to an earthly friend. Its "meditations on him are sweet;" and communion with him in ordinances is coveted, as the only source of permanent happiness.

The office which faith sustains enhances its worth.

5. It sets before the eyes of its possessor the awfully heinous character of sin, convicts him of manifold transgressions, and shews him the punishment to which he is justly exposed on account of them. It is, however, the especial province of saving faith to make such a disclosure to the mind. Unbelief renders men totally insensible, either of the aggravated nature, or of the just deserts of transgression. But when faith comes to scatter the thick darkness in which the mind is naturally enveloped, a man finds "that sin," viewed by the light of the commandment, "is exceeding sinful." The discovery fills his soul with alarm; and in anguish, he exclaims, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death^h?" Now, the heart, which before was callous, is softened into godly compunction for its trespasses; and it "looks on Christ who has been pierced, and mourns for him as one mourneth for his only son, and is in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born^o." Thus "repentance unto life" is the inseparable companion of a belief of the truth.

6. Faith is not less effectual for convincing the awakened sinner of the insufficiency of his own righteousness to justify him before God. Divesting him of all his fancied excellence, by a display of the great and palpable defects of his best services, it in-

^h Psalm lxi. 1—7. civ. 34.

^o Rom. vii. 24, 25.

^o Zech. xii. 10.

clines him to renounce all his works as a ground of dependence, that he may confide in Christ alone for salvation;—a blessing, the grant of which is suspended on our self-renunciation.

7. Having thus shewn him the imminent peril in which he is placed by his offences, and that all hope is for ever cut off of meriting heaven by the deeds of a law which requires a perfect course of life, and seeing no other mode of deliverance but that which the death of Christ affords, faith makes the humbled sinner willing to be saved in “this new and living way, which God hath consecrated for us^p.” His understanding contemplates the glory and the ability of Christ as “a mighty Saviour^q,” the extent of his redeeming love, the infinite value and efficacy of his sacrifice, and the necessity of a personal interest therein, by an appropriation of its immense benefits^{qq}.

And now, his former prejudices having vanished at the sight of the cross, he cordially welcomes Jesus in the merciful office which he sustains—as a Priest, to present an offering before God for the atonement of his iniquities, to procure him acceptance, and, by his continued intercession, the liberal donation of all spiritual mercies; as a Prophet, to instruct him in the will of God; and as his King, to reign over and subdue him to the obedience of his Gospel. Discovering, by the aid of faith, such a plenitude of grace in Christ for the supply of his necessities, he desires to live upon his fulness, to rejoice in his love, and to ascribe his salvation, both in time and eternity, to the free mercy of God in Jesus Christ, his Lord. In this spirit, he closes with the Saviour, by entering into a solemn covenant with him; whereby he stipu-

^p Heb. x. 20.

^q Isa. lxiii. 1—6.

^{qq} John vi. 50—59.

lates "to fight under his banner, and to continue his faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end".

Much satisfaction is consequent on this union with Christ. A sense of the remission of sin is sealed upon the conscience of the believing sinner, and the peace of God is granted as an assurance of reconciliation; whilst the imputation of Christ's righteousness, accompanied by the sanctifying influences of the Spirit, and the promise of Divine support in every trial, with the tokens of God's loving-kindness and a hope full of immortality, encourage him to "be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as he knows that his labour will not be in vain in the Lord". Inexpressibly happy is the man who is under the discipline of faith: "he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation".

8. The invincible power of faith appears most clearly from a consideration of the metaphors and language used by the sacred penman to describe its nature and operations on the soul. It is compared to armour, for defence in battle. Amongst the various weapons with which the Christian warrior is to be furnished, he is directed "to take, above all, the shield of faith, wherewith he may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked". He is advised to take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; and to put on the breast-plate of faith and love, and, for an helmet, the hope of salvation". The use of such armour, to secure combatants from the missile and offensive weapons of their foes, is too well known to require explanation. Suffice it to say, that the purposes which they answer in a natural sense,

* Baptismal Service.

" 1 Cor. xv. 58.

* Psalm xxiv. 5.

† Eph. vi. 16.

* 1 Thess. v. 8.

faith accomplishes in a spiritual : it not only effectually preserves the soul from the combined assaults of its adversaries, but enables it to triumph over them, and attain eternal life.

Again, it is likened to the most valuable members of our bodies ; the exercise of whose functions is so necessary, that the loss of them subjects us to a thousand inconveniences. Thus faith is metaphorically called an eye, “ looking unto Jesus^{uu}.” Indeed, it is that precious vision of the soul, by whose assistance it discerns “ the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord^x,” which must otherwise be concealed from the observation of the most sagacious of merely natural men^y.

Furthermore, it is compared to a hand. As the pensioner stretches forth his hand to receive the bounty of his patron ; so does faith conduct a needy sinner to Christ, that he may derive from him all those treasures of grace which fit him “ to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

Moreover, it is exhibited under the figure of feet, without which we cannot transport ourselves from one place to another. Faith gives us a holy activity, so that we run the way of God’s commandments with diligence and delight. Hence Christians are said “ to walk by faith ;” “ to live by faith^a ;” “ to stand by faith^a ;” “ to overcome the world by faith^{aa} ; and, finally, to be “ saved by faith^b ;” expressions which demonstrate the superior efficacy of this Divine grace to support the soul in all its spiritual conflicts with the powers of darkness, as also to advance it in holiness, till it arrives at “ the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ^{bb}.”

^{uu} Heb. xii. 2.

^x Phil. iii. 8.

^y Hab. ii. 4. Gal. iii. 11.

^a 2 Cor. i. 24.

^{aa} 1 John v. 4.

^b 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2.

^{bb} Eph. iv. 13.

^{bb} John xvii. 17.

It is, however, from the striking effects produced by faith, that its tendency to promote our happiness is so apparent. A mere speculative admission of the truth of Scripture is not productive of the fruits of righteousness, which are the peculiar growth of a right belief of the Gospel. A cold assent thereto does not prostrate the soul before God in humility for its guilt, nor beget any availing desires to serve him with sincerity. A lively faith, on the contrary, is always attended with the most blessed consequences.

We have had occasion already to notice its office as an enlightening and humbling principle: I shall now briefly speak of it as a sanctifying, as an operative, and as a victorious principle.

9. It is, under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the means of our sanctification; which is a work that must be performed, in order to qualify men for the pleasures of heaven. Now we are assured that faith in the word of God is a great instrument in effecting our renewal in righteousness. "Sanctify them, says our Lord, through thy truth^c." "God put no difference betwixt the Gentiles and the Jews, purifying their hearts by faith^d."

10. It is described, by the Apostle Paul, as an operative principle, "working by that love^e" which is the fulfilment of the Law^f. It excites the heart, from the discovery which it makes of the character of God, to love him supremely, and to evince the ardency of its affection for him, by keeping his commandments^g.

No other principle but faith, thus manifesting itself in love to God, and conformity to his prescribed will, can stimulate the mind to acceptable

^c John xvii. 17.

^f Rom. xiii. 10.

^d Acts xv. 9.

^e John xiv. 15.

^g Gal. v. 6.

obedience. Neither moral suasion, nor the fitness of things, nor the dictates of conscience, can ever so far prevail as to induce a right state of soul towards God, without faith^{ss}.

Besides, it produces undissembled love to the brethren of Christ, in whom his image is faintly reflected. Faith connects us with them, as members of the same family, towards whom it disposes us to shew kindness and brotherly affection.

It is a diffusive principle, which cannot be confined within ordinary limits. It seeks, by practicable and certain means, the universal good. Hence it prompts those who submit to its guidance, to study the welfare of the souls and bodies of all who come within the sphere of their influence. The genuine disciple of Christ, in imitation of his Divine Master, will use his utmost endeavours to advance the spiritual interests of mankind. Knowing the certain misery to which a life of iniquity finally leads the impenitent, and the felicity which is attendant on true piety, he will advise his neighbours and friends, and all with whom he holds intercourse, to desist from the former, and to pursue the latter with an earnestness proportioned to its value. He will strengthen these affectionate remonstrances and admonitions, by his own holy example. But, although a desire to save the souls of men from eternal death is the most exalted species of philanthropy, yet the Christian will not confine his attention to their spiritual wants: he will open wide his charitable hand, to relieve their bodily necessities, by acts of liberality commensurate with his resources; and he will manifest a sympathy in all their sorrows, which will assist in mitigating, if not removing, the pain which they occasion. According to the direc-

“ Heb. xi. 6.

tion of St. Paul, "he will rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep^b."

11. Faith is not less triumphant, than it is salutary in its operation. It is spoken of as a victorious principle, which surmounts every obstacle, and vanquishes all opposition. "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith^c."

The Scripture has recorded several remarkable instances of the triumphs achieved by faith. We shall advert to a few of them. It was through the force of this Christian grace, that Abraham, "the Father of the Faithful, left his country and dearest connexions, to sojourn in a strange land, where he was encompassed by enemies^d." He gave a memorable proof of obedience and resignation to the Divine will, by the intentional sacrifice of his son, which shewed the strength of his unshaken affiance in the Almighty. "By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead^e."

Its influence on the Jewish Lawgiver was not less striking. "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of reward^f."

Here we may sum up the account of the victories obtained by the Worthies of old, in the sublime description of an Apostle:—"And what shall I mor

^b Rom. xii. 15.

^c 1 John v. 4.

^d Heb. xi. 8—11.

^e Heb. xi. 17—20.

^f ib. 24—27.

say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the Prophets; who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection; and others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings—yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth¹¹.

If martyrs and confessors in more recent times have gone cheerfully to the stake, and freely shed their blood in defence of the truth, it must be ascribed to their faith in Christ, by which they were so remarkably supported under the most exquisite sufferings.

That faith has not lost its efficacy, is clear, from its effects on ordinary Christians in our own age. It enables a believer to brave the most formidable difficulties in his sacred calling, and to persevere in righteousness unto the end of his pilgrimage. It leads to endless life, by opening to his mental vision the grand realities of the heavenly world; and, by strengthening him, to trample on the blandishments,

¹¹ Heb. xi. 32—40.

and overcome all the temptations, which assail him in this.

Such, then, is the faith of the Gospel :—" it is an invaluable gift, the bond of our union with Christ, the scale of paradise, the key of the ark of the new covenant by which its treasures are unlocked, the never-ceasing fountain of a holy, quiet, and blessed life."

On the other hand, unbelief, which is the governing principle in natural men, is a deadly evil, that excites enmity to God, imprisons the soul in unrighteousness, and precipitates it to the "bottomless pit." Cry mightily to the Saviour, you who are under the destructive sway of unbelief, to give you an abiding faith in his merits ; which will qualify you to serve God acceptably in the Gospel of his Son, enjoy his consolations here, and a "crown of rejoicing" hereafter.

12. Since, however, there is a spurious, worthless faith, which resembles, in some respects, that holy and all-conquering grace whose virtues have been celebrated in this Lecture ; it will conduce to a right application of the subject, to examine seriously the nature of the faith which, as individuals, we profess to exercise. This inquiry is highly requisite, especially as upon the soundness or unsoundness of our faith, and the effects which have resulted from it, our justification or condemnation hereafter will entirely depend.

To assist you in ascertaining the state of your souls on this momentous point, the actings of a vital faith may be thus compendiously stated :—It causes a sinner to understand and acutely feel the deep criminality of transgression, humbles him in the dust of

" Mark xvi. 15, 16.

abasement for his offences, constrains him to sue earnestly for pardon, to acknowledge that his punishment would be just, and to cast himself entirely upon Christ for deliverance "from the wrath to come:" and it furnishes him with all the aids of grace, by which he cherishes devout affections and desires, and displays in the tenor of his religious life the lovely "and peaceable fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

Is your faith of this saving kind? Does it produce effects so fraught with happiness to man, so pleasing to God? Or, with an orthodox creed, do you live in the neglect of duties, and in the commission of offences which the Scriptures reprobate? Notwithstanding you believe all the Articles of the Christian religion, yet, so long as you are devoid of humility and sanctified affections, and walk disorderly, deceive not yourselves with an opinion that you possess the faith of the Gospel, which overcometh the world, and dedicates the heart to the service of the Lord. Your faith, then, it is obvious, is a dead, barren, inoperative belief, which the devils possess, and trembleⁿ. And can you deliberately acquiesce for a moment longer in such a soul-destroying faith? Are you aware of the consequences that must ensue from "holding the truth in righteousness?" Where now are Satan and his apostate companions? Where now are those persons who have departed this life in a faithless and unbelieving state of mind? And in what place are unprofitable servants doomed to take up their eternal abode? Not in the mansions of everlasting glory, but "in outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Oh! that a conviction of the danger to which un-

ⁿ James ii. 19.

belief and impenitence expose men, may render you earnestly desirous to become possessors of true faith, which is the gift of God ; that, thus being reconciled to him, and united to Christ by indissoluble ties, “ you may have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life^o.”

• Rom. vi. 22.

LECTURE XXIV.

ON JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IN CHRIST.

Rom. v. 1. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

JUSTIFICATION by faith, in the merits of Christ our Saviour, is that fundamental article of the Christian religion which relates to the method of a sinner's acceptance with God.

Of so much consequence was this doctrine reckoned by the champions of the Reformation, that they styled it, “ the Article of a standing or falling Church.” Let us, then, endeavour to understand the nature of justification, in order “ that we may earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints^a.”

But “ how shall guilty man be just with God^b ?” is a question in which every descendant of Adam is deeply concerned ;—a question which, notwithstanding its infinite importance, we could never have answered, had not the Gospel made it so plain, “ that the way-faring man (when taught of God), though a fool in human sciences, shall not err therein^c.” And such is the sovereign pleasure of God, that he often discovers this truth, in all its glory, to those who are

^a Jude v. 3.

^b Job ix. 2.

^c Isa. xxxv. 8.

esteemed foolish by the wise of this world, in order "that no flesh might have the least ground for boasting in His presence."

Justification is a term of frequent use in courts of judicature; and signifies a sentence pronounced by the judge, affirming a person to be innocent of the crime of which he has been accused; and that, having been fairly tried by the laws of his country, and no proof of guilt being established, he is honourably acquitted from every judicial charge, deemed worthy to live, and entitled to all the benefits enjoyed by that society to which he belongs. It is directly opposed to a sentence of condemnation which is passed on a guilty person, who has been formally convicted of a capital offence, and is judged worthy of the punishment of death.

The words justify, justified, and justification by faith, are used by the sacred writers, to shew how God admits sinful creatures into a state of acceptance with himself, and to the privileges of being thus accepted. Justification, in a Gospel sense, is a gracious act of God, by which a sinner is absolved from the guilt of sin, freed from condemnation, accounted righteous, and possesses a title to eternal life, merely for the sake of Christ's obedience unto death; which is imputed to him, and received by faith.

Justification is either legal, or evangelical.

1. If any one can be found, who is perfectly innocent in thought, word, and deed, and has never in any instance deviated from the righteousness of the Divine law, but observed all its precepts by an unlimited, sinless, and perpetual obedience, he may be justified by it in a manner which is properly legal; yea, he has a promise of heaven, as a just reward for such services. But, in this way, not one of the human

race can be justified, or stand acquitted before God. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God^d." In themselves, "there is none righteous, no, not one." "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, there is none that doeth good, no not one^e." "Now, what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God^f." Thus the whole world, according to the testimony of heaven, is convicted of having transgressed the Divine law, and consequently lies under its awful sentence, which is eternal death^g. On this ground, every offender is deprived of hope, and sentenced to utter destruction. For as the law will not accept of any but a perfect righteousness, so it certainly inflicts its penalty, which is eternal misery, on those who fall under its curse.

2. The other mode of justification, revealed in the Gospel, is that which suits the case of ruined sinners. This evangelical scheme of mercy justifies the ungodly, not by a personal or inherent, but by an imputed righteousness, wrought out by the Lord Jesus Christ himself^h. In this way, the justice of God is highly exalted by the full satisfaction of its claims, and there is a rich and boundless display of mercy exercised towards objects wholly undeserving of the inestimable benefit.

To justify in the manner which has been stated, is the high prerogative of heaven. It is God that justifiethⁱ. That glorious Being, whom we have provoked by many foul acts of rebellion, has, in the way of his own appointment, the sole right of acquitting

^d Rom. iii. 23.

^e ib. iii. 10—13.

^f ib. iii. 19.

^g Gal. iii. 10.

^h Rom. iii. 21—23.

ⁱ ib. viii. 33.

the guilty, on their repentance, and of declaring them righteous. "God justifies all them that believe in Jesus^l." He has provided the means, appointed the way, imputes the righteousness, and pronounces the penitent sinner forgiven, in entire accordance with the demands of his violated law, and the rights of his injured justice.

Although justification is repeatedly ascribed to the Father, yet it is obvious that each of the three Divine Persons in the Blessed Trinity performs a distinct part in this grand transaction, as well as in the whole economy of our redemption. God the Father devised the astonishing plan, and fixed the conditions on which he was willing to become propitious to his offending creatures. Christ took our nature upon him, that he might sustain the curse of the law, make atonement for transgression, and furnish the righteousness which is requisite for our justification. And the Spirit of holiness, in conformity with his sacred office, reveals to contrite sinners the perfection, suitableness, and freeness of the Saviour's work, as exhibited in the Gospel, and testifies to their consciences complete justification by it in the court of heaven; and "therefore, being justified by faith, they have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ^k."

In this manner God justifies. "And may we not ask, in the triumphant language of Scripture, who is he that condemneth?" If God pronounce a sinner acquitted, who, on earth or in hell, shall reverse the sentence? If the Most High entirely justify, who shall bring in a second charge? There is no superior tribunal at which a complaint can be lodged against any of those happy souls, whose invaluable

^l Rom. iii. 26. ^k ib. v. 1.

privilege it is to be justified by the eternal God. Whom he acquits in judgment, he absolves from all guilt, he accepts as completely righteous ; otherwise, a person, immediately after he is justified, must be supposed to stand in need of further justification, which is highly absurd. This divine sentence can never be made void, but stands "firmer than the everlasting hills, unshaken as the throne of God."

3. How glorious and divine is the blessing of justification ! It secures every advantage which the covenant of Gospel Grace can confer ;—pardon of all past offences, however numerous, provoking, or long-continued ; freedom from condemnation ; a declaration of righteousness in the justified, who are treated as holy persons that have never sinned ; acceptance with God, tokens of his Fatherly regard, the sweetest peace and communion with him, and a happy foretaste of everlasting glory, to be fully enjoyed hereafter—these are the invaluable benefits which flow from justification unto life. Can any one, who is conscious of possessing it, cease to exult in God, his justifier, who becomes also the God of his praise ? Or who that is convinced of his guilty condition as a sinner, will cease to pray, and most ardently to long for it ? May the God of salvation awaken the sleepy consciences of the inconsiderate, into a deep solicitude about it ! and may he direct those who are anxiously inquiring "How shall we be just with God?"

4. Those persons to whom the surprising favour is vouchsafed, are sinners, ungodly, destitute of any good qualities to merit it. The Apostle thus speaks on the subject : "To him that worketh is the reward of eternal life not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith (in

Christ for justification) is counted for righteousness¹." Thus we learn, that they are not persons who are in any sense righteous in themselves, but rebels against the Divine Majesty, who are the peculiar objects of God's undeserved mercy in Christ. Let not this assertion surprise us ; for the Holy Records abundantly confirm the consolatory truth. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered ! Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin ^m!" From this and other passages of Scripture, which speak the same language, it is clear that the partakers of justifying grace have no righteousness to boast of, and have performed no good works at all ; on the contrary, at the very time when the blessing is bestowed upon them, they are considered as ungodly.

And hence it is obvious, that mere sinners, the guilty offspring of Adam, are the only subjects towards whom this mercy can be displayed : for righteous characters, who have never sinned, require no justification : their conduct, being fully conformable to the holy law, entitles them to its endless rewards.

But where, amongst the degenerate sons of men, is one to be found, who will rashly assert that he is of himself righteous, in opposition to the voice of God, which loudly proclaims the guilt of the whole human species ? "They are all gone out of the way ; they are together become unprofitable ; there is none that doeth good ; no, not oneⁿ." "If we justify ourselves, our own mouth shall condemn us ; if we say we are perfect, it shall prove us perverse^o ; for, is

¹ Rom. iv. 4, 5.

^m ib. iv. 6—9.

ⁿ ib. iii. 12.

^o Job ix. 20—22.

not our wickedness great? and are not our iniquities infinite?" Justification, therefore, must be entirely of free grace, abounding to the chief of sinners.

5. That justification is not to be attained by works, or by the deeds of the law, is evident from Scripture and reason. No law, human or divine, can permit the violation of itself with impunity. On the contrary, all laws threaten those who transgress them with pains and penalties suited to the offence. The law of God proceeds on the same principle. It requires an exact conformity to its precepts, as the terms on which it dispenses favour; but visits the least breach of its demands with everlasting death. Thus it accosts the transgressor: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them^a."

Here we learn, that they who are seeking to be justified by their own performances, must possess a righteousness unsullied by a single defect. If but one sin be committed, the authority of the law is dishonoured, and acceptance by it becomes impossible. The pen of inspiration assures us, "that whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all^r;" and, of course, is exposed to endless ruin.

It is certain, that none ever did merit heaven by works. Even Adam stood convicted of transgressing the holy command, when the Divine law was engraven on his heart, and he did not want the power to obey it. If he, who was so well qualified to keep the law, yielded to temptation, must it not be presumptuous for any of his degenerate offspring to suppose that they can accomplish what he failed to perform? The fact is, the Ten Commandments demand

^a Job xxii. 5.

^r Gal. iii. 10.

^r James iii. 10.

a degree of purity in our thoughts, words, and actions, which, through the corruption of our nature, we cannot render unto them ; and, as they will not tolerate the slightest deviation from the path of holiness, they proceed to condemn all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, upon whose consciences they fasten a charge of guilt, and expose their persons to everlasting wrath. Hence, the conclusion of St. Paul is irresistible : “ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God ; for by the law is the knowledge of sin^a. ”

6. Some have unwarrantably imagined, that the Gospel dispensation has introduced a sort of new remedial law, milder in its demands, and accepting a sincere though imperfect obedience, as the condition of eternal happiness. The Scripture does not once allude to any such provision ; but, on the contrary, informs us, that so far is the Gospel “ from making void the law^b, ” or relaxing its obligations, that its awful sanctions are thereby rendered more firm and unalterable. Our Saviour confirms this sentiment : “ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets ; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. ” To secure the honour of the moral law, and to shew his high displeasure against those who wantonly infringe its precepts, or encourage others to do the same, he adds, “ Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven : but, whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven^c. ”

^a Rom. iii. 20.

^b ib. iii. 31.

^c Mat. v. 17—21.

7. Where then can we find a justifying righteousness fully adequate to the demands of the law of God? for, without such a righteousness, we must remain eternally under its awful curse; as no law can justify, unless it be completely obeyed.

Blessed for ever be God! he has provided the means of our justification, which are such as reflect the highest lustre on his perfections. In the choice of the method by which he saves us from deserved wrath, "he has magnified his name and his mercy above all things." The perfect obedience, the bitter sufferings, and accursed death, of our Divine substitute, Jesus Christ, furnish such a righteousness as God can accept, and guilty man may safely plead. The glorious work which the Son of God completed, when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, and rose again from the dead, is the grand requisite for our justification before the heavenly tribunal^{uu}. This it is alone to which the eternal God has respect, when he pronounces a sinner righteous, and acquits him in judgment.

The righteous obedience of Christ is described by the Prophets and the Apostles as a vicarious work, undertaken for the benefit and the salvation of others: Hence he is expressly called, "The Lord our Righteousness^x." We are said to be made righteous by his obedience^{xx}; and to be "justified by his blood^y." Thus the dreadful sufferings of the holy Jesus, the spotless integrity of his life, and his exact conformity to every precept of the law for man, which, for the supreme excellency of it, "is called the righteousness of God," include in them that complete satisfaction required by the law, which, being fully accepted by God, and imputed to a penitent sinner,

^{uu} Rom. iv. 25. ^x Jer. xxiii. 6. ^{xx} Rom. v. 19. ^y ib. 9.

are the cause and the sole ground of his discharge. This, without any addition whatever, is that work of righteousness, for the sake of which he is pronounced just, and adjudged to inherit eternal life. The merit arising from Christ's sacrifice, and the obedience of our surety, are placed to the sinner's account, as fully, and as much to his advantage, as if he had suffered the curse of the broken law in his own person, or obeyed its high demands.

Now, with this obedience of Christ unto death, which magnifies and honours the law, God declares himself well pleased^y; and, with a strict reference to it, when dispensing salvation to a contrite soul, he exclaims, "Deliver him from going down to the pit! I have found a ransom^z."

In this consecrated way, Abraham, the Father of the Faithful, was justified, when "he believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness^a." St. Paul also gloried in this method of justification by Christ; and solemnly deprecates the thought of ever confiding either in his own works, or in any other person but the Son of God, for complete salvation and happiness:—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world^b."

That bright host which surrounds the throne of God, unanimously ascribes its endless felicity to the redemption of Christ:—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen^c."

Nor has there been, since the Fall, any other way

^y Isa. xlii. 21.

^a Job xxxiii. 24.

^b Rom. iv. 3.

^c Gal. vi. 14.

^d Rev. i. 5, 6.

by which a sinner can find acceptance with God; but through the death of Jesus the Mediator. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved^d." "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses^e." Through the same medium we, however vile and unworthy, may have access to God, and secure his favour, if, deploring our guilt, we turn unto him with full purpose of heart. Seek, then, ye who are inquiring what you must do to be saved, to obtain "justification freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus^f"; who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord^g."

8. We are interested in the righteousness of Christ, and appropriate its important benefits by imputation. The merit of what he has done and suffered, is reckoned or placed to the account of a contrite sinner, and becomes his own, and avails with God for his salvation, as much as if he had personally obeyed the law. Abraham was justified in this manner. But in this respect he had no exclusive privilege; for it is said by St. Paul, "that it was not written for his sake alone, that faith was imputed to him for righteousness; but for us also, whether Jews or Gentiles, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead^h." "For they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abrahamⁱ."

^d Acts iv. 12.

^e ib. xiii. 38, 39.

^f Rom. iii. 24.

^g 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

^h Rom. iv. 23—25.

ⁱ Gal. iii. 9.

Faith is the instrument by which we apprehend and take possession of the merits of Christ's death, for justification unto life. Hence "the righteousness of God (provided for our acceptance) is said to be by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe^k." Faith is that hand which receives and applies the gift of righteousness when offered, discovers to the mind of a sinner the suitableness of Christ's mediatorial undertaking, and invests him with the advantages resulting therefrom. It is for this reason that faith is so highly extolled in the Scriptures: we are said, to be "justified," "to walk with God," and "overcome the world by faith." Until faith enlightens our minds, we have no proper sense of our guilt and misery and wants; nor are we disposed to apply to Christ for salvation, or to trust in his meritorious sacrifice for pardon and everlasting life. Earnestly beseech the Father of mercies to bestow this divine gift upon you, that you may believe on the Son of God, who is become "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him^l."

9. Ye who are yet without justification, reflect on the awful situation in which you are placed. The law of God, which has been so often dishonoured by your sins, holds you accursed, and passes sentence of condemnation upon youⁿ. You have despised the authority of God, and cherished a spirit of enmity against him: your conscience tells you that you have not loved his Gospel; and that you have felt no concern whether he was pleased or offended, so that you could but gratify your impetuous lusts, and obtain your wicked purposes. You have incurred the wrath of God, which is ready to fall upon you. And will you continue insensible of your danger, or be

^k Rom. iii. 22.

^l Heb. v. 9.

ⁿ Gal. iii. 10.

negligent about securing the grace which can deliver you from it? Will you still prefer a state of guilt and condemnation, to the being justified by Christ, and being made partakers of heavenly felicity? If so, you must die under the curse already passed on you. In such a case, your sentence, though awful beyond imagination, cannot be considered unjust. But if sorrow for your iniquities should lead you to throw yourselves at the feet of the cross, and to found your hopes of justification on the righteous obedience of Jesus Christ, then you will be absolved from all your offences, you will pass from death unto life, and finally triumph with the redeemed in the enjoyment of unceasing happiness.

Bear in mind, then, thoughtless sinner, that you have an important cause shortly to be tried at the bar of God, which will issue in your eternal misery or happiness. You must be either cast or acquitted in judgment. Can you rest while you are entirely ignorant whether the Judge Immortal will absolve or condemn you?

Examine the ground and reason of the hope which is in you. A mistake about the way of salvation will be attended with inevitable ruin. See to it, that you build, for acceptance with God, "upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone^m." Repentance for past offences, and faith in the blood of Jesus, will put you in possession of present forgiveness, and a hope full of immortality. Justified by the righteousness of your Saviour, and sanctified by the grace of his spirit, you will thus be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding great joy^{mm}; and then you will sincerely join with the angelic throng in

^m Eph. ii. 20.

^{mm} Jude v. 24.

singing an anthem of praise to your glorious deliverer; "saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessingⁿ."

10. Self-righteous persons, who seek to establish a claim to the Divine favour by their own sinful and imperfect deeds, do, in effect, dishonour Christ, and pour contempt on his sacrifice. You can never be saved in a way different from the redeemed people of God. They disclaim all idea of merit, and attribute their salvation solely to the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. You must renounce all confidence in your own works, or you will perish for want of Christ's righteousness to cover your innumerable sins.

Will you, then, obstinately adhere to a system that must destroy you? Will you, at length, appear before God, clothed in the defiled garment of your own sinful works^m, or be vested with the unspotted robe of the Saviour's incomparable holiness^o? In the former, your guilt and hypocrisy will be clearly seen; and punished, at the day of reckoning: in the latter, you will appear holy and undefiled, and be admitted, through its merits, to the joys of the kingdom of heaven.

11. Let those who have already fled for refuge to Jesus, and have obtained justification through his blood, be filled with admiration of the matchless love of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. When you lay under sentence of condemnation and death, God pitied you in your low estate, forgave your sins, adopted you into his family, and now treats you as

ⁿ Rev. v. 12.

^m Isa. xxviii. 20. lvii. 12.

^o Isa. lxi. 10. Rev. xix. 7, 8.

beloved children, for whom he has in reserve the most substantial blessedness.

Now you are pardoned, "go, and sin no more." Henceforth let it be your ambition to glorify God, "who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;" "for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ^p."

^p 2 Pet. i. 11.

LECTURE XXV.

ON THE NECESSITY OF HOLINESS AND GOOD WORKS, AS
AN EVIDENCE OF A GENUINE FAITH.

Heb. xii. 14. *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

It was affirmed by one of the most enlightened Heathen moralists, that if men would but contemplate the native excellency of virtue, they would be so strongly attracted by its resistless charms, as to feel the most vehement desires to walk agreeably to its dictates. This assertion may look plausible enough as a speculation, but it is falsified by matter of fact.

Virtue of the most exalted kind, without any thing weak or erroneous to debase it, was powerfully embodied in the life and actions of Jesus Christ: but so far was the exhibition from exciting general admiration, that the Jews, provoked by the virtuous example of Christ, because it condemned their wicked lives, took every method to vilify and degrade it; and, at length, their hatred ran so high, that they put the Lord of Glory himself to a cruel death, in whom such an assemblage of moral excellencies was found

as never adorned the conduct of any merely human being.

And, perhaps, the reason why the Gospel, in all its glorious efficacy to save sinners, is so commonly overlooked or despised, is the exceeding sanctity of its precepts, which does not comport with the corrupt maxims and practice of the unrighteous. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil^a." Yet, it is unreasonable to expect that the requisitions of God's word are to be lowered, to suit the carnal taste of degenerate men.

The Gospel enjoins duties which are of perpetual obligation: it requires, of all who would enter heaven, devout affections, and a holy and pious life. It will be in vain, then, for any man to indulge a hope of happiness beyond the grave, if he does not "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world^b."

1. That holiness, and those good works which Christians cherish, as evidences of the genuine nature of their faith in Christ, and as manifestations of their love towards God, are called by different names.

At one time they are styled "fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God^c." Good works are often comprehended under the abstract term of holiness, which signifies, not only every righteous disposition, but also the whole of that religious obedience which a believer is enabled to perform, through the gracious assistance of the Holy Ghost. They are, moreover, called "the fruits of the Spirit," because they are the result of his operations on the heart. "The fruit of the Spirit

^a John iii. 19—22.

^b Titus ii. 11—13.

^c Phil. i. 11.

is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance^d." By good works, as the expression occurs in Scripture, must be understood those pleasing fruits which are produced by the grace of God, in conformity to his will and command. They are found in none but real believers; whose hearts being renewed by the Spirit, and a principle of holiness being implanted therein, "they alone walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy (as the exclusive cause of such happiness), they attain to everlasting felicity^{dd}."

2. Of course, then, the best actions of an unregenerate man, however useful they may be in promoting the temporal welfare of society, are nevertheless imperfect and sinful^e. They are not to be confounded with that holiness of life and purity of heart which the Gospel demands; because they do not spring from those Christian principles (faith and love) which are necessary to render them acceptable, but from a regard to worldly reputation and advantage.

The law of God, which is the standard by which every human action must be judged, does not approve of any works as good, in a religious sense, which do not originate from right motives, and are not done with regard to some proper end. Those actions which are destitute of these qualifications, however they may glitter in the eye of men, are viewed only as splendid abominations by God, who "looketh not on the outward appearance, but on the heart^{ee}."

3. How then is that holiness to be obtained which

^d Gal. v. 22—24. ^{dd} Article 17. ^e Article 13. Rom. xiv. 23.

^{ee} 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

affords the only meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light? This is indeed an important question, which deserves an explicit answer.

The history of man, since the fall of Adam, incontrovertibly proves, that works really good are not the spontaneous produce of the human heart, which of itself is the poisoned spring whence every vice in principle and practice emanates. An inveterate dislike to true religion and goodness, with an obstinate attachment to sinful pursuits and vanities, mark the behaviour of the unrenewed soul in its most polished state. It neglects humility, contrition, faith, obedience, and conformity to God, as if they were superfluous; or it boldly despises them as odious and unbecoming. This radical aversion to good is easily accounted for, by an indisputable authority, which affirms, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be^f." We maintain, therefore, that no human principles possess sufficient power to rectify the heart, and make it abound in every good word and work. Neither a view of its moral fitness to advance his felicity, nor any impulse of an unregenerate bosom, is strong enough (without the grace of God) to enable a man to acquire a habit of availing piety. It is true, natural motives are capable of effecting natural works, but can never produce those religious fruits and effects which entirely result from heavenly principles.

4. Faith and love are the grand sources from whence acceptable obedience, to God must flow. Faith, which "is the gift of God," is the root and foundation of all holiness of life and conversation, without which a man is counted dead before God.

^f Rom. viii. 7.

Now, the very circumstance of faith's being the work of God, demonstrates its holy nature, and should put a stop to the blasphemy of those persons who disparage it as a licentious principle^a. The direct tendency of this divine principle to produce in us every holy thought, feeling, and desire, is unquestionable, if either the testimony of God as to its nature, or the evidence of facts as to its effects, are to be admitted in its behalf. We may form some idea of its high original, and transcendent efficacy "to purify the soul from dead works to serve the Living God," when we are told, "that faith is the operation of God," and that it "worketh by love." Does it indeed work by love? Yes, verily, as may be seen in the case of those who are subject to its mighty influence. It removes the enmity of the soul against the righteousness of the Divine law, reconciles it to God, and constrains it to glorify him with the devotion of all its powers. By "shedding abroad, as faith does, the love of God in the soul," it is no marvel, if gratitude for such distinguishing mercy should induce the object of it to love God in return with a pure heart fervently.

Nor is faith a less powerful cause of love to man. By fixing in the soul a principle of Christian benevolence towards others, it removes that narrow selfish spirit which sin has introduced, and excites us to love our neighbour as ourselves, by doing him all the good we can, both temporal and spiritual. Now, love to God and man, which is the offspring of a saving faith, is said to be the fulfilling of the law, and the sum of all its moral obligations^b.

5. Whilst the Scriptures ascribe the production of good works to faith, they unanimously declare that

^a Eph. ii. 8. Acts xv. 8, 9. Gal. v. 6.

^b Rom. xiii. 10.

no acceptable obedience can flow from natural principles. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin^{ss}."

With these sentiments, the language of the Thirteenth Article fully concurs: "Works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God: forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." This doctrine is ratified by the suffrage of some of the brightest ornaments of our Church, who willingly sealed it with their blood. "Whatsoever work is done without faith, it is sin. Faith giveth life to the soul; and they be as much dead to God that lack faith, as they be to the world whose bodies lack souls. Without this faith we have not (good works), but only the names and shadows of them: as St. Augustine saith, All the life of them that lack the true faith is sin. We must set no good works before faith, nor think that before faith a man may do any good works; for such works, although they seem unto men to be praiseworthy, yet indeed they be but vain, and not allowed before God^h." How glorious, how divine a grace, is faith! Covet earnestly this precious gift, since it is the efficient cause of all true goodness in the souls of believers.

6. Furthermore, that ardent love to God which faith produces, is found to be a prevailing motive, with the Christian, to the practice of righteousness. In proportion as a man is under the sway of Divine love, he will cheerfully perform his duty towards God and all mankind. "Whatsoever things are

^{ss} Rom. xiv. 23. ^h Homily on Good Works, pp. 38, 39.

true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, he will be induced to think on these things," in order to reduce them to practice^{hh}.

Love generally begets love. We may expect, therefore, that the manifestations of God's abundant kindness to a believing soul will enkindle a flame of reciprocal affection in return, which shall urge it most sincerely to keep his commandments. Accordingly, a prevailing desire to please God, and promote his glory in the world, is discoverable in the deportment of Christ's disciples. The honour of their Divine Lord, and the prosperity of his righteous cause, constrain them to pray with fervency, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven !"

And further, it may be observed, that the unostentatious manner in which they perform their religious duty renders it more pleasing to God, whilst it marks the efficacy of the vital principle by which they are governed. Observant of their heavenly Master's direction^{hh}, they do their works of faith and righteousness, not to be seen of men, but to glorify their Father who is in heaven. That love which stimulates to this cheerful obedience, is thus characterized by St. Paul : "It rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; it beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all thingsⁱ."

7. It is obvious, however, that no such fruits of piety are found in the lives of unregenerate persons. The works which they perform differ so greatly from those above mentioned, both as to quality and the motives from which they spring, that they can only

^{hh} Phil. iv. 8.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xiii. 6, 7.

be esteemed as dead works, which are neither beneficial to themselves, nor acceptable to the Lord. The highest motives that can actuate those who are destitute of faith in Christ, in the performance of their best actions, are, in reality, selfish and worldly; and their most brilliant deeds, for want of love to God, are but false resemblances of works truly good. Are such persons charitable,—they will be so under the influence of ostentation, or from a desire of establishing their own righteousness, or a thirst for the applause of their fellow-creatures, whose good opinion they wish to secure. And if, in some instances, unconverted men despise the vulgar applause of the multitude, as an excitement to liberality, still they cannot easily divest themselves of the common though dangerous persuasion, that, by almsgiving to the poor, they shall be able to compound for their sins, and render God propitious to them, notwithstanding they may live in the breach of all his commands.

The mode and the spirit in which such works are done, are solemnly reprobated by Christ:—"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven^k." Works performed in such a temper are as injurious to the souls of men, as they are repugnant to the word of God. They are virtually designed to supersede the necessity, and pour contempt on the atonement of Jesus, which is the only foundation of a sinner's hope of everlasting life. That the most plausible deeds which spring from improper motives cannot avail in the smallest degree to salvation, is clear, from the words of St. Paul:—"Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and

^k Mat. vi. 1.

have not charity (or love to God, and man for his sake), it profiteth me nothing¹."

8. Next to a due regard to the principles and motives which incline us to obedience, we should pay attention to the end for which we act: for, however unexceptionable the means may be, by which we pursue an object, yet, if the end proposed is bad, the means which are used to attain it can never sanctify the act; nor can any flattering appearances which a wicked action may assume, alter its real character in the judgment of God.

The ends which a Christian proposes to attain by a holy life, are two. His first object is, to glorify God, to whom he feels himself under infinite obligation, for the redemption of his soul from the bondage of sin and eternal misery; a blessing which gratitude prompts him to acknowledge, by every token of love and sincere obedience. The thought, that conformity to the law of righteousness is pleasing to God, makes him desirous to approach, in his practice, as nearly as possible to the letter and spirit of that sacred rule.

The second end which he proposes, by practising the precepts of the Gospel, is, to advance his soul in those devout tempers and affections which may qualify it to partake of the joys and employments of the heavenly state.

Let us narrowly examine our works by the foregoing test, in order that we may be able to judge whether they possess those qualities which give them estimation in the sight of the All-wise God. Are love to your Maker, and zeal for the honour of his name, and a wish to acquire a meetness for heaven, the ruling principles that govern you in your religious

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

concerns? When you resort to the house of God, or pray to him in private, or perform any sacred duty, are these things done from faith and love and gratitude? or, like too many who are Christians only in name, do you engage in a round of cold and heartless devotions, from a spirit of pharisaic pride and self-righteousness; falsely supposing you can make God your debtor, and merit heaven by deeds which he condemns? If this should be the case, as it possibly may, then it behoves you to act no longer under so fatal a delusion, but to entreat God to form your hearts anew in righteousness, that you may possess a power to accomplish those good works which he would have you to perform.

9. The necessity of a righteous life is strongly enforced by St. Paul: "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord^m." "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous persons, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of Godⁿ."

Good works, then, are highly necessary, for the following reasons:

1. To demonstrate that we are partakers of the saving grace of God. How can it be evident to ourselves or others, that we are regenerated by the Spirit of the Lord, unless we display, in our general behaviour, those holy tempers, affections, desires, and virtues, which appropriately mark the character of those "who are born from above?" It is a maxim we must never depart from, in forming a judgment of their religious state, that men are to be known by

^m Heb. xii. 14.

ⁿ 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.

their fruits°. “Little children,” saith the beloved Apostle, “let no man deceive you : he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as God is righteous : he that doeth not righteousness is not of God^p.”

To shew the ultimate design which Jehovah proposes to himself in renewing his people's hearts, St. Paul affirms, “They are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them^q.”

10. Acts of piety are absolutely necessary, to evidence the existence and genuine quality of our faith. Now, as “faith worketh by love,” how can it be ascertained whether you are in possession of the inestimable grace, except as you discover, in the bias of your minds, unfeigned love to God, and sincere affection towards mankind? You, then, who profess to live under the dominion of that “faith which is the operation of God,” examine the tenor of your actions and whole conduct, that you may not stand in doubt respecting your state; “for as the body without the Spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also^r.”

11. Holiness of heart and life is essentially requisite, because it is commanded of God. “Follow after holiness.” Works springing from right principles are truly pleasing to God, because they are the produce of his own grace. “Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me; and to him who ordereth his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God^s.” In the piety and obedience of his saints, the Almighty beholds the work of his Spirit, and is glorified thereby. “This people have I formed for myself: they shall shew forth my praise^t.”

* Mat. vii. 16.

^p 1 John iii. 7—11.

^q Eph. ii. 10.

^r James ii. 26.

^s Psalm l. 23.

^t Isa. xlii. 21.

12. A life of devotion to God is requisite for maintaining that sweet communion with Him and his Son Jesus Christ, which is a favour granted to them that obey him. The Divine Being, who loveth righteousness, will not reside, by his Spirit, in the hearts of the unbelieving and impure. "What communion hath light with darkness?" He can never be satisfied with those who bring forth no fruit to his glory. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but, if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*." A holy and becoming deportment, then, is needful to secure to believers "the light of God's countenance." Their stability and enjoyment in the Divine life must depend upon the degree of diligence with which "they perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord".

13. That righteousness of life which is attendant on a regenerate state, is absolutely necessary, as a qualification for heaven. A man must have a proper taste for the blissful enjoyments of Paradise, before he will either value or seek them. This consideration ought to carry a conviction to all our bosoms, of the necessity of "our being renewed in the spirit of our minds;" in order that we may become "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light." How can any, even the most thoughtless character, hear the determination of God to exclude the impious and unholy from heaven, without resolving, by Divine help, to amend the evil of his ways? As surely as God is unalterably true, he will soon definitively say, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust

* 2 Cor. vi. 14.

* 1 John i. 6, 7.

* 2 Cor. vii. 1.

still ; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still^a.”
 “Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth^a.”
 It will then be too late to wish you had reformed ; for the day of grace being past, it cannot be recalled.

How forcibly do such reflections urge upon you the expediency of your becoming holy, in thought, word, and deed ; that, through the mercy of God, and the all-prevailing merits of Christ, you may be qualified to take up an everlasting abode in the realms of bliss.

14. To prevent, however, the dreadful mistake of trusting in our works, instead of firmly relying on the sacrifice of Christ for salvation, let it be carefully observed by all, that no obedience, which we can perform, constitutes any part of that righteousness by which we are to be justified of God ; for that righteousness by which a man can be justified, must be absolutely perfect, without the least flaw or imperfection. But the holiest deeds of the best men are greatly defective in this life: so that, if God were to enter into judgment with them, not even the most righteous could stand in the awful trial, on the footing of their own performances : yea, even their best deeds would not bear examination ; much less atone for their past transgressions. After we have done all that is enjoined us, we must consider ourselves “unprofitable servants^b.” You see, then, that however highly expedient works are, as evidences of faith, yet they are not to be relied upon, in whole or part, for acceptance with God ; because the Scriptures declare “that we are justified freely

^a Rev. xxii. 11.

^a Mat. xxv. 30.

^b Luke xvii. 10.

by His grace^c;" and because such a reliance is a denial of the efficacy of Christ's merits, and subverts the glorious scheme of redemption by His blood^d.

Like St. Paul, let us utterly disclaim our best services as a ground of dependence for salvation, and confide in the superlative merits of Immanuel. "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith^{dd}." Thus clothed with the beautiful garments of Christ's salvation, our guilt and defects will be concealed, and we shall appear faultless before God, with exceeding great joy^e.

^c Rom. iii. 24.

^d Gal. ii. 21.

^{dd} Phil. iii. 8, 9.

^e Jude 24.

LECTURE XXVI.

ON SANCTIFICATION.

1 Thess. v. 23. *And the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

ALTHOUGH justification and sanctification are inseparably connected, yet are they, nevertheless, distinct blessings of the Gospel covenant; and there is, in some respects, a material difference between them, which may be thus explained. Justification is that merciful act of God which relates to the pardon and acquittal of a sinner, whereby he is exempted from

punishment, accounted righteous, and a title is given him to inherit eternal life. Sanctification is a constant work of grace on the heart; which so alters the quality of a man's dispositions, habits, and actions, as to terminate in a thorough renovation of the mind and change of life. Justification is, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ, by faith. Sanctification is a state of holiness wrought within us. The one precedes, as a cause: the other follows, as a proper effect. The former deprives sin of its condemning power: the latter, of its reigning influence. Justification is complete at once; but sanctification progressively increases, till it is perfected, in the heavenly world, in our glorification.

1. Sanctification occupies a conspicuous place in the economy of our redemption, and is the grand design and end of salvation by Christ. In the purification of our corrupt nature, and our renewal to a state of primeval holiness, whereby we become fit to hold communion with the Lord, the very essence of this grace consists. Hence sanctification may be called a work of God upon the soul; by which they, who are justified, are renewed after his Divine image^a; and are thereby qualified to perform his will, and to participate his glory, through endless ages. How invaluable great is this celestial gift! It beautifies and ennobles the soul; makes it "an habitation of God, through the Spirit^a;" and is the beginning of a state of felicity, which never ends, but is continually augmenting through all eternity.

2. Sanctification is immediately effected, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. On this account, he is styled "the Spirit of Holiness^b;" because he im-

^a Col. iii. 10.

^a Ephes. ii. 22.

^b Rom. i. 4.

plants devout affections, excites good desires and purposes, and, by his special assistance, enables us to bring the same to a successful issue.

In accomplishing so important a work as to bring a sinner to approve and pursue a righteous course of life, and to hate and forsake iniquity, he uses instituted means. At one time, the forcible application of Scripture to the mind is made the medium of communicating the benefit. "Sanctify them through thy truth! Thy word is truth^c." At another, the efficacy of a vital faith in Jesus is employed, by the Holy Spirit, for the purpose. "He opens the eyes of his people, turns them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me^d."

And, sometimes, the powerful application of Christ's sacrifice to the mind in a spiritual manner, is made the instrumental cause of our purification. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the Living God^e!"

Whether sanctification be ascribed instrumentally to faith, or to the efficacy of Christ's death, or to the energy of the word of the Gospel, in each case we must regard the ever-blessed Spirit as that Almighty Agent whose express office is "to sanctify all the elect people of God." To Him must our prayers be offered, for his renewing grace, if we desire to have the depravity of our evil nature corrected and subdued, and that sanctity of heart produced

^c John xvii. 17.

^d Acts xxvi. 18.

^e Heb. ix. 13, 14.

in us which is indispensably necessary to our temporal and eternal welfare; for the unalterable decree of heaven is gone forth, "that without holiness no man shall see the Lord^f."

Hence, holiness and happiness are convertible terms: when the former exists and flourishes in the soul, the latter, also, will be found there, in some degree; just as good health is the almost certain consequence of food and exercise, and of a well-tempered constitution.

3. Sanctification is not effected at once, but is a gradual and progressive work: it has its commencement, progress, and consummation.

At the time of our conversion from sin and ignorance, to the knowledge of God and the practice of Christian virtues, sanctification is in its incipient state: it advances, as the soul is more confirmed in love to God: and it will be completed at the Resurrection, "when Christ will transform the vile corruptible bodies of his saints, and fashion them after the similitude of his own glorious body^g:" and then, being established in holiness beyond the possibility of ever falling away, they will resemble God, in their attachment to righteousness, and in an invincible hatred to iniquity.

The sanctification of the soul has, however, in the present imperfect state, to encounter difficulties in every stage of its advancement. Happily, God, who imparts sanctifying grace to the souls of his people, in order to prevent the extinction of the Divine life, maintains and cherishes it incessantly; he fans the feeble, and sometimes almost expiring, spark, into a flame of light, "which shineth more and more unto the perfect day^h." Notwithstanding the obstacles

^f Heb. xii. 14.

^g Phil. iii. 21.

^h Prov. iv. 18.

which hinder the growth of a believer in those things which are well pleasing to the Lord ; notwithstanding the deep corruption of his heart, and the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil ; he can clearly trace, on a review of the past, compared with his present state, a visible improvement in the whole temper and bias of his mind : he can discern in himself a sensible increase of light and knowledge and grace : he finds himself better acquainted with the character of God, and with religious truths ; he understands more of the desperate wickedness of his heart, his irresolution and weakness ; and sees more distinctly his need of constant assistance from an all-gracious Saviour. These are real and satisfactory marks of sanctification, begun, and in a state of advancement ; which, if fostered by a simple dependence on Divine aid, in our efforts to obtain heavenly dispositions, will assuredly terminate in a fitness for the enjoyment of Christ's kingdom, for which the sanctified mind has an undoubted qualification. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God¹."

4: Different degrees of sanctification are attained by the disciples of Jesus, in the Church militant on earth. Though none of them, perhaps, arrive at so great a measure of perfection as they might attain to, by a more conscientious use of means ; yet some are found to make a greater and more solid proficiency in knowledge and holiness than others. Owing to the weakness of their faith, the strength of those corrupt tempers with which they have to contend, and the severe pressure of bodily or mental infirmities, some Christians, who are nevertheless sincerely desirous to glorify God, make but small advances in the way of righteousness. Contenting themselves with a partial victory over the sins which beset them,

¹ Mat. v. 8.

they do not constantly maintain that vigilance and self-denial, and exercise those active and passive graces, which are necessary, in order to mortify depraved inclinations and habits, and to promote the spirituality, health, vigour, comfort, and stability of their minds. And hence they frequently have occasion to cry, "My leanness, my leanness !" But how can inert Christians expect to thrive more abundantly, unless they devoutly aim at improvement in the Divine life ? Do such persons promise themselves the enjoyment of bodily health without food and exercise ? It would be as unreasonable to look for all the perfection of manhood in a babe, as to expect that a negligent person should prosper in religion like one who is earnestly intent upon "growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christⁱⁱ."

Sanctification, then, exists in proportion to the measure of grace vouchsafed, and the diligence with which it is improved. Happy are they who, faithful to the light which has been given them, endeavour to increase it, by aspiring after universal purity of thought, speech, and conduct ! They will undoubtedly obtain "the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of their salvation^k."

5. The nature and importance of sanctification will be more distinctly understood by a brief consideration of the gracious work which is wrought, at the time of their conversion, by the Holy Ghost, on the hearts of the Saints and faithful in Christ Jesus.

6. The crucifixion of sin is effected by grace. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil^{kk}." This object, Christ in part accomplished, by his triumph over Satan on the cross ; and is now carrying

ⁱⁱ 2 Pet. iii. 18.

^k Psalm xxiv. 5.

^{kk} 1 John iii. 8.

on, by the holy agency of his Spirit, "who cleanses the thoughts of men's hearts by his inspiration, that they may perfectly love God, and worthily magnify his holy name¹."

When the heart is, in any degree, sanctified by the infusion of Divine grace, sin appears exceedingly hateful. The light which is communicated makes the darkness more manifest; so that the soul is thereby enabled to discern good from evil, righteousness from iniquity.

Now sin, whatever shape it may assume, becomes abhorrent to the new principle of holiness which predominates in the breast; and it is firmly opposed, as particularly injurious to the soul, in robbing it of peace, and defiling it, so as to render it "a vessel of wrath, fitted for destruction." Viewed in this light, it is no marvel if a believer should discover the same irreconcilable enmity to unrighteousness, as Hannibal evinced towards the Romans, against whom he swore, on their own altars, eternal vengeance.

Ashamed of his former unprofitableness, the Christian determines not to live the rest of his time in self-gratification, but in holy obedience to the Divine will¹¹. Hence his strenuous endeavours to mortify corrupt desires and propensities, "that the whole body of sin (the depravity of his nature) might be destroyed, that henceforth he should not serve sin^m." No iniquity is spared. Love to God prompts him to extirpate, if possible, all remains of corruption; to pluck out the right eye, and to cut off the right hand^{mm}; that is, to renounce the darling lusts, which were once as dear to him as those invaluable members of his body. That he might not

¹ Collect for the Communion Service. ¹¹ 1 Pet. iv. 2.

^m Rom. vi. 6.

^{mm} Mat. v. 29, 30.

give any quarter to his sins, he brings them daily to the cross, that there they may suffer a gradual and certain death. Thus they who are Christ's, crucify the depraved lusts and affections of the flesh^a; reckoning themselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord^{aa}."

7. The life of righteousness is no less an effect of grace, than the mortification of sin. Sanctification being a renewal of the heart, and a consecration of all the faculties of the mind to holy and religious uses, the subjects of this grace act agreeably to their regenerate state. They who have been called out of darkness into marvellous light feel desirous to walk worthy of their high vocation, in order that they may be the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation^o. "They give all diligence, to add to their faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity^p." To abound in these holy fruits, and to cherish habits of piety, is the ardent wish of a "heart which is right with God." Knowing that he is unspeakably pure, a man who is sanctified by the Spirit cannot be happy unless he becomes more like unto God; and it will ever be a cause of deep regret to his mind, that he is so defective, both in spirit and practice, with regard to the righteous law of his Maker, to which he labours to be entirely conformed. And though a state of sinless perfection is not attainable on earth, yet he feels a prevailing desire to approach

^a Gal. v. 24.

^o Phil. ii. 15.

^{aa} Rom. vi. 11.

^p 2 Pet. i. 5—8.

it as nearly as possible, in order that he may be fitted to serve God more perfectly in heaven^a.

8. The importance and blessedness of sanctification is so supremely great, as to render it worthy of every man's most ardent pursuit. Its importance may be inferred from the rank which it holds in the New-Covenant dispensation. Sanctification is the principal object of our calling and election; an especial promise of the Gospel; an advantage resulting from the application of redemption by the blood of Christ; the end to be answered by our regeneration and adoption, and absolutely necessary to our glorification^{qq}.

The value of sanctification is apparent, in its enabling us to serve God in his earthly courts below. They only who delight to do his will, and to yield a cheerful obedience to his commands, are regarded by God as his children and beloved friends. Others are aliens and outcasts, in whom he can take no pleasure, so long as they are destitute of those holy affections which dispose the righteous to love and honour him.

And, oh! how sweet is the peace which they enjoy who fear the Lord! Their consciences being disburthened of a load of guilt, and being pacified towards him, are at ease, whilst they have a most comfortable assurance and foretaste of joys that cannot be expressed^r.

Nor is present satisfaction the only benefit to be derived from the pursuit of a religious life. The godly man is the lawful heir of heaven^r, which, in due time, he will possess evermore. "It is their Father's good pleasure to give his people the kingdom^s," and

^a 1 John iii. 3. ^{qq} 1 Pet. i. 2. John xvii. 17. 1 Thes. iv. 3.

^r 2 Pet. i. 1—8. Heb. x. 14—23. Eph. i. 4, 5. Heb. xii. 14.

^s Psalm iv. 3.

^t Luke xii. 32.

the enjoyment of those sublime pleasures which he has prepared for them. "For whom he did fore-know, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

9. Unrenewed characters, who are destitute of sanctification, should be aware of the perils of their situation. With hearts full of wickedness, and averse to all that is good, how wretched is their condition! If they die in their present state of alienation from and enmity to God, they must be undone through all eternity.

And are you, Reader, in this unpardoned and unsanctified state? And do you dream of happiness without conversion? "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Jehovah must cease to be holy and just, and alter the constitution of heaven, before he can approve of evil, or permit the wicked to dwell in his presence.

Think not, then, careless sinners, that a little reformation, or an occasional abstinence from vicious courses, will avail you any thing at the last day. If, indeed, you would possess a joyful hope "of entering into life," you must surrender at discretion, and give up yourselves unreservedly to God. You must be born again, and possess a new heart and a

* Rom. viii. 29, 30. v. 1—6.

* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

right state of the affections, before you can do the will of the Lord, or be allowed to see his face with joy and exultation^{uu}.

There are no difficulties in the way of your sanctification, but unbelief, and a rooted attachment to sin. If you will but seek it with a becoming earnestness, the blessing is certainly attainable. Thousands, besides the Corinthians, have already been "washed, sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God^x."

The fountain of Christ's blood is still open, to cleanse the most polluted heart. Though your souls, then, be ever so much defiled, yet, when purified in the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness," they will lose their guilt, and retain neither "spot, nor wrinkle, nor blemish, nor any such thing^y." Is not such a condition as desirable as it is blessed? And will you not be chargeable with cruelty to yourselves, if you neglect to pray that "God, by His especial grace preventing you, may put into your minds good desires; and that, by His continual help, he may enable you to bring the same to good effect^{yy}; that so, with all his "ransomed people, you may return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon your heads; may obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing for ever flee away^z."

10. Those who have partly obtained the blessing of sanctification, should labour incessantly after a fuller conformity to the Divine will. Not contented with your present low attainments in knowledge and faith, you should daily be going on to perfection, "pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" "not as though you had al-

^{uu} John iii. 3.

^x 1 Cor. vi. 11.

^y Ephes. v. 27.

^{yy} Collect for Easter Sunday.

^z Isa. xxxv. 10.

ready attained, either were already perfect ; but following after that for which you are apprehended of Christ Jesus^a;" "praying the very God of peace to sanctify you wholly, and that your whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ^b." To lament from the bottom of the heart our manifold defects, and to aspire after holiness in principle and in practice, is the best kind of evidence of our Christian sincerity, and advancement in grace, without which the most splendid profession is but hypocrisy and deceit.

Believers are imperiously called upon to cherish devout affections. "It is the will of God, even your sanctification^c." This single consideration should excite men "to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God." Besides, a variety of other reasons forcibly urge it upon Christians. Has God in mercy adopted you as his peculiar people, as his beloved sons? Has he called you to an heavenly inheritance? Has Christ redeemed your souls from death, and sent his Spirit to sanctify you? Do you not sustain a filial relation to the Triune God? Then, as you are not your own, but the exclusive property of Him who hath bought you, "glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's^d."

^a Phil. iii. 12—15.

^b 1 Thess. v. 23.

^c 1 Thess. iv. 3.

^d 1 Cor. vi. 20.

LECTURE XXVII.

ON THE PRIVILEGES WHICH EXCLUSIVELY BELONG TO
CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS.

1 Cor. iii. 21—23. *For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's.*

WORLDLY men, whose thoughts and desires are totally absorbed with present objects, are too apt to consider religion as a mean and visionary pursuit, which is unproductive of any advantage that can recompense the patience and self-denial which it requires. This opinion is not only contrary to truth and experience, as a cursory glance at the privileges of a sincere Christian will demonstrate; but is also an impious attack on the wisdom and goodness of God, who has connected the best interests of man, in both worlds, with a conscientious attention to the duties of religion. "Godliness," says an inspired writer, "is profitable for all things; having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come^a."

A Believer is a person who receives the testimony of God in his word, as strictly and unalterably true; and acts suitably to such a conviction. Conscious of his guilt and demerit, he has fled to Christ for salvation, who is set forth in the Gospel as a refuge for sinners: embracing him by faith as his Redeemer and Intercessor, he confides altogether in his atonement and obedience, for acceptance with God; and he regards the Holy Spirit as his Sanctifier and Guide to the possession of that eternal glory which his Saviour has purchased for him.

^a 1 Tim. iv. 8.

This Divine faith and knowledge makes a Christian to differ most essentially, both in spirit and in practice, not only from his former self, but from the ungodly world around him. Actuated by love to God, he exhibits such fruits of piety in his general conduct, as evidence the superiority of his principles, at the same time that they condemn the wickedness of the rest of mankind^a.

To this state of grace and salvation the most distinguished blessings are attached. The charter of privileges secured by the Gospel covenant to believers, is so rich and extensive, that the limits of a short Lecture will only allow us to touch slightly upon it.

We have already discoursed concerning some of those advantages which result from the exercise of faith in Christ. We have seen, that, on the repentance of the Children of God, he remembers their iniquities no more; grants them a full, free, and everlasting forgiveness; justifies them from every charge of guilt; esteems them righteous in Christ; accepts their persons and services; and gives them a foretaste of those heavenly pleasures which they will hereafter enjoy in his kingdom. There are, however, some capital blessings belonging to Christians, which, not having been noticed, deserve a distinct consideration: these are, adoption and preservation.

1. Adoption into the family of God is a privilege connected with a state of Salvation; the nature of which, as it was anciently practised, may be thus explained. "It was customary, especially in the States of Greece and Rome, for a man of wealth, in default of issue from his own body, to make choice of some person, upon whom he put his own name,

^a Heb. xi. 7.

proclaiming him his heir, and requiring him to relinquish his own relations, and never to return to his own family. In this act there was an imitation of nature, by which the afflictive failure of offspring from themselves was supplied by something as much like a child of their own as possible. The person thus adopted was, by law, entitled to the inheritance, upon the decease of his adopter; and, however void of the least title to such a benefit before, he was now invested with the same privilege as if he had been really born the son of his benefactor. If such an act of adoption were to take place in favour of a pauper, or a destitute orphan, how conspicuous would be his exaltation! how exceedingly pleasing the change in his condition! In the judgment of the world, how happy the object of such a prosperous providence!"

Our natural state is more pitiable than that of a desolate orphan, or an indigent beggar. Christ affirms, "that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," till our relation to him, by a living faith, at once enriches us with all spiritual blessings. This is, indeed, a hard saying, which offends carnal men: but believers acknowledge such to have been their own case. In this deplorable condition, they heard, understood, and believed the record of the Gospel, that "God sent forth His own Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons^b; and be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God^c: for to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God^d."

In this way, believers pass from the kingdom of Satan into the family of God, by a gratuitous adoption.

^b Gal. iv. 4, 5. ^c Ephes. ii. 19. ^d John i. 12, 13.

God calls them out of darkness, and makes them "partakers of his divine nature," by regeneration; and thus they truly become his children, by a "death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness."

Adoption both recognises their title, and admits them to the fruition of the privileges belonging to such a relation.

Surely they who receive this inestimable gift of Heaven are the happiest men in the world! Their joy is as much superior in its nature to the highest earthly gratification, as light is to darkness, and health to disease. Have not they cause to cry out, in joyful admiration, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God?" What a dignity and honour, to be adopted into a filial and covenant relation with the Most High, which makes them rich and happy to all eternity! "For all things," saith the Lord, speaking by his Apostle to true believers, "are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas,"—all means, ordinances, and Ministers, for your spiritual good; or the world, all things in it, as far as they can be of any real service; or life, as long as its continuance can be a favour,—and, when it ceases, death shall be gain;—"things present and things to come, all temporal and eternal mercies, are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." How rich the charter of blessings! how vast the inheritance conveyed to the people of God! They who know it is their own by the free gift of God, cannot but rejoice in his love towards them. And this assurance is, in a greater or less degree, vouchsafed to the minds of his sons: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs

* 1 John iii. 1.

† 1 Cor. iiii. 21—23.

of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together*.”

The joy of God's chosen servants is inspired and supported by the spirit of adoption, which the new covenant connects with the privilege of adoption. Men are fallen to a great distance from God, which is increased by their wilful offences against him, of which their consciences accuse them. The consequence is, that they often stand in doubt concerning the intentions of their Maker respecting them. This distrust of God aggravates their misery, and prevents their receiving consolation from above, at the time when it is most needed. Hence, carnal men approach him, in their afflictions, not with filial affection, but with a faltering tongue and trembling heart.

The case is happily the reverse with believers. They look up to God with the sweet confidence which children have in their beloved parents. Instead of sinking under the weight of distress, or flying from the Lord as the wicked do, they come before him as a tender father, make known to him their wants, and obtain relief. Emboldened by his past kindness, they place unshaken affiance in his promises, and wait in humble patience, until he sees fit to remove them from this vale of sorrow, to the land of peace and joy above. There they will be favoured with immediate access to God, enjoy his paternal smile, and realize the accomplishment of that word in which he hath caused them to put their trust. Their privileges on earth distinguish them from all others. The state of their minds is thus described: “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we

* Rom. viii. 16—19.

cry, Abba, Father^b." But, oh ! how enviable their condition in heaven, where they will possess fulness of joy and pleasures evermore ! No gratification can equal that of believing souls, which delight themselves in serving God, and knowing that he is their great and all-sufficient friend. "The calm of mind, the blissful sunshine, and the entire complacency in God, which the spirit of adoption creates, is called 'the kingdom of God within.' And the more believers grow in grace, and in the love and knowledge of Christ, the more they are sure to enjoy of the spirit of adoption, in all his sanctifying, consoling, and beneficial influences."

2. The preservation of the saints in Christ, their living Head, is a spiritual gift, which sweetens the enjoyment of every other favour conferred upon them. God so keeps his regenerate, elect people, (who in themselves are weak and apt to fall away,) internally, by the most powerful efficacy of his Spirit ; and externally, by means appointed for that purpose, that they never entirely lose the principle and habits of those graces once infused into them, but shall be certainly brought, by a stedfast perseverance in well-doing, to eternal salvation.

It is true, that, overcome by the power of indwelling sin, and the violence of temptation, the righteous may grievously offend God, and provoke his displeasure ; still, as the holy seed sown in their hearts is an incorruptible principle which liveth and abideth for everⁱ, though it may lie, for a season, dormant within them, yet it cannot totally perish, but will bring forth fruit that remaineth to everlasting life. The children of God, then, may, for a time, "fall from their stedfastness ;" yet, by the grace of God, they

^b Rom. viii. 15. ⁱ 1 Pet. i. 23.

will rise again, as David and Peter did, amend their conduct, and so regain those tokens of Divine regard, of which they had been for a time deprived.ⁱⁱ

“God will keep the feet of his saints^k,” and preserve them from final apostacy, in order that his “eternal purpose” of mercy towards them in Christ may be fully accomplished, by their unending glorification in heaven.

God mercifully engages to be with his people whilst they pass through the troublesome ocean of this life, to deliver them from all its storms and dangers, and at length to bring them to the haven of rest, where their souls would be. Thus speaks the Living God: “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me^{kk}.” This covenant, which secures the bestowment of constraining and preserving grace to the elect people of God, has been solemnly ratified by the oath and promise of the Lord; “that by these two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us^l.”

Will, then, the infinitely wise God, who is also faithful and just to fulfil his word, make so many promises in vain? Will he deceive those who confide in his veracity? The perfections of his nature, and the tenor of his dealings with his Church, forbid the unjust supposition. “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good^m?”

ⁿ Article 16. ^k 1 Sam. ii. 9. ^{kk} Jer. xxxii. 38—41.

^l Heb. iv. 18—20.

^m Num. xxiii. 19.

Moreover, has God of his unconstrained mercy chosen his people, and will he abandon the objects of his love? Did he choose them that they might "be holy, and be made conformable to the image of his Son," and will he give them up to sin, instead of saving them in a way of holiness? No: for he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Because God is unchangeable in his regards, he will preserve them for ever. Under a firm persuasion of this animating truth, the Apostle of the Gentiles challenges the enemies of our salvation to do their worst, with a certainty of victory over them all: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord^a."

Further, as each of the Sacred Persons of the Trinity performs a distinct office in the salvation of the elect, and as Christ claims his people for a "purchased possession," it is not credible that he will consent to lose those for whom he cheerfully endured "his bloody sweat, cross, and passion." His love to his chosen flock is as great as his care and power to defend them from every peril of their probationary state. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them; and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand^b."

^a Rom. viii. 29.

^b Heb. xiii. 5.

^c Rom. viii. 35—39.

^d John x. 27—30.

God especially covenanted with Christ, as a recompence for his sufferings, to give him a people who should be to him for an everlasting joy and crown. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

Now, if those whom God thus gives to Christ for an unalienable inheritance "may make shipwreck of the faith and of a good conscience," and be eventually lost without recovery, then may also the promise of God fail, his covenant be broken, and the grand object of Christ's death be altogether frustrated.

The Holy Spirit, also, as the sanctifier of God's peculiar people, is concerned in their preservation. Would he lay in their hearts the foundation of a spiritual temple, if he meant at last to leave that for the abode of devils which he has been so long forming for an habitation for himself? If this were to be the case, then would his work of grace, in regenerating the soul, be rendered useless and nugatory; and thus the redeemed, instead of being glorified with angels, might share with the wicked the insufferable torments of hell.

How secure, how happy are the saints! "Called and preserved in Christ Jesus," they will, on their departure out of this world, obtain "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; reserved in heaven for them who are kept, by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

3. It is incumbent, however, on those "who possess a good hope through grace," to remember that God has provided certain means for insuring their

* Isa. liii, 10—12.

* 1 Cor. vi. 19.

† Jude 1.

* 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

preservation. These are, a constant perusal of his word; the exercise of devotion, prayer, and meditation; resistance of sin, watchfulness, endeavours to increase in spiritual wisdom, holiness, and strength; and to walk agreeably to their heavenly vocation. In the diligent use of such means of grace, God supports the spiritual life in the souls of believers. Would you, Christians, maintain "the assurance of hope unto the end?" then "give all diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*."

* 2 Pet. i. 10, 11.

LECTURE XXVIII.

ON THE JOYS AND PLEASURES PECULIAR TO A REAL CHRISTIAN ON EARTH.

Psalm lxxxix. 15—18. *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance: in thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*

THE religion of Jesus may appear, to those who are strangers to its nature, and to the happiness which it imparts to its votaries, a melancholy system, contrived for the very purpose of robbing us of every pleasure, and of making us wretched and gloomy through the whole course of our earthly existence. Now, the reason why unbelievers and sensualists thus undervalue and disparage the Gospel, the excellence of which they do not understand, is easily accounted for by St. Paul:—"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are

foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned^a.” “ If, then, our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost ; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them^b.”

But that men who call themselves Christians should revile the very joys which Christianity was revealed to inspire, is truly astonishing : but such is the fact, that the pleasure which God has promised, and which he really vouchsafes to his obedient people, is decried by some as an enthusiastical delusion.

“ The ground of this prejudice against the divine joys springing from the faith of Christ, is easily discovered. If that joy be real, as it assuredly is, then those who are destitute of it must be only counterfeit Christians, by their own confession ; and they must perceive at once how despicable is their religion, which consists in a cold assent to Scriptural truths without feeling their power, in a round of duties without spiritual life, or in seeking to be honest, sober, and harmless, without any more delight in God than infidels experience.” So that, on the admission of God’s favour to his chosen, the peace and security of the formalist and the self-justifying phariseæ are disturbed. Hence, to preserve their own quiet, they cry down, as the rankest enthusiasm, those joys to which themselves are strangers. A carnal man is not able to endure the thought of others receiving tokens of love from God, with which he himself is unacquainted.

To such causes, aided by a few instances of deception and hypocrisy, may be ascribed those general

^a 1 Cor. ii. 14.

^b 2 Cor. v. 3, 4.

and stubborn prejudices against one of the sweetest privileges of a Christian—joy in God.

In vindication of this privilege, we shall endeavour to shew that sincere believers do experience much comfort and delight in God, during their abode in this vale of tears. From whence it will be evident, that the obedient people of God, so often pitied as miserable on account of their self-denial and strictness of life, which separate them from the licentious world, do really enjoy more pleasure than any people on earth.

1. The knowledge of God the Father, in his adorable perfections, in his word, and the various works of his omnipotent hand, in the covenant which he has made with them, and the everlasting benefits which it provides,—of Christ the Son of God, in his original glory and amazing humiliation, in his redemption, sufferings, exaltation, and mediation,—of God the Holy Ghost, in his miraculous gifts of old, his perpetual influences and consolations, together with the grand realities of the eternal world,—are subjects of meditation which afford the most devout pleasure to the minds of true believers. How excellent is such knowledge of Divine Truth! It is not like a barren speculation, which may fill the head without affecting the heart and life; but is lively and powerful in its operation^{bb}, penetrating the inmost soul, and yet ministering the greatest delight.

Attainments in science so charm those who make them, that they cheerfully submit to the severest toil and study in the pursuit of them. The discovery of truths relating only to objects of time and sense, is highly gratifying, though they have no power to give

^{bb} Heb. iv. 12.

the dispositions which are essential to peace of mind. If such knowledge be pleasant, how must our joy be increased by the perception of spiritual truths which possess grandeur enough, independent of their great importance, to fill the soul with unceasing admiration !

Believers are brought, by the happy change made in their condition, into a new and glorious world, which presents to the eye of their faith a thousand objects interesting beyond measure, tending to their honour and exaltation. And, in proof of the advantage they derive from their knowledge of them, the agreeable transition from night to day is chosen to represent their joy, on seeing themselves delivered from the power of Satan, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord."

The pleasure believers enjoy from their first acquaintance with sacred truths, increase as they advance in Christian perfection. There is a sensible progress in divine, as well as in human knowledge. At first they obtain a faint and confused view of the Gospel scheme of salvation ; but afterwards a fuller discovery is made to them, of its use, excellence, and benefits. At first they receive the truth with fear and hesitation ; but afterwards, being more enlightened by the Spirit, they come to a full assurance of understanding and hope, and comprehend that which before was but superficially known. Such progress is inseparable from perseverance in the faith of Christ, and always proves a spring of satisfying pleasure.

The knowledge possessed by the Christian, of things spiritual, is peculiarly satisfying, because it

confers the most substantial and lasting benefits. What so invaluable in itself, or so necessary to the peace and happiness of men, as the full and everlasting forgiveness of their sins^{cc}, the assurance of God's favour^d, and the transporting hope of an heavenly inheritance^{dd}? If a bright expectation of celestial bliss, founded on the absolute promise of God, does not inspire its possessor with "joy unspeakable and full of glory," we are at a loss to conceive from what other source it can flow. All other objects, merely temporal, which can interest the mind, leave men, in the midst of their enjoyment, to feel occasionally an aching void, and wants which nothing earthly can satisfy. Neither the knowledge nor the possession of natural things, though useful enough as far as they regard this imperfect state, will support, much less profit, men who are strangers to God, when they are called to bid a lasting adieu to the present scene. Even the greatest proficient in human knowledge, if not enlightened with the wisdom which cometh from above, must die, as well as other worldly men, at last, in awful suspense and uncertainty respecting their future condition.

But sincere Christians derive from their knowledge of salvation by Jesus, contentment in every condition, victory over evil passions and inordinate affections, a shield against the attacks of Satan, and a supernatural fortitude which bears up their soul in the hour of trial, and a glorious prospect of ineffable felicity to begin, as soon as this mortal life is ended.

Knowledge so divine and beatifying enriches the poorest and lowest disciple in the school of Christ: and, if men of talent and education would have a

^{cc} Isa. xliii. 25. Jer. i. 20.

^d Isa. lvii. 15. lxiv. 5.

^{dd} Luke xxii. 28—31. Col. i. 5.

share of its blessings, they must seek it as the free gift of God in Christ, bestowed in the use of the means of grace. If sought from a sense of want, and with earnest prayer, it is sure to be found; but, if men neglect or despise it for the vanities of the world, they will find, when it is too late for repentance, that shadows have been exchanged for a substance which endureth for ever. On the other hand, to induce us to cultivate Divine knowledge with the utmost persevering diligence, it is strongly recommended by one who knew its superlative worth:—"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her; and happy is every one that retaineth her*."

Now, they who spiritually understand the word of God, and believe his promises, will, without any hesitation, allow, that the saints have more pleasure than all others; yea, that every enjoyment which does not spring from faith in Christ is only misery in disguise.

2. The faithful in Christ Jesus possess a source of inexpressible pleasure in having God as their Father and constant friend, in a peculiar sense, to which no others but themselves can lay claim.

Many passages of Scripture assert this distinction. They who through grace believed in Christ, and received him as the Messiah, "to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; who were born not of blood,

* Prov. iii. 13-19.

nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God¹." When Jesus was about to leave the world, he comforted his Apostles and Disciples by saying, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God²."

If Jehovah condescends to bear so near a relation to the faithful, it is rational to conclude that his love for them far exceeds the affection of earthly parents towards their offspring. Every father, who is worthy of the name, manifests his delight in his children, by many expressions of love; and thus the harshness of subjection is rendered pleasant to them. And is it not perfectly agreeable to reason, to suppose that the Eternal Father may and does make as sensible a difference between his obedient servants, and hypocritical and formal professors of religion, as we do between our dutiful children whom we caress, and our stubborn ones whom we keep in awe? Is it unreasonable to suppose, that whilst he grants the knowledge of his salvation to them that fear him, he should suffer others to remain at a distance from him, without any spiritual light and understanding, grovelling in the guilty pleasures of sin and the things of time, which they basely prefer to God and all the riches of his grace? Certainly this is a most rational conclusion; especially when it is considered that, throughout the Bible, believers are declared to be the delight and glory of God. It is in vain to object against this doctrine, as implying too great a condescension in him, his as making men of too great importance; because the Scripture account of the communion between God and the faithful strongly affirms that such condescension and regard are bestowed on them. He, then, who is ready, upon

¹ John i. 12. 13.

² John xx. 17.

either of the above suppositions, to mock at the mention of the Christian's joy in God, arising from the near relation which he bears towards him, despiseth not man, but his adorable Creator, who, of his super-abounding goodness, promiseth to render his beloved sons happy both now and evermore. "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people^h."

3. Communion with and access to God, at all times, through Christ, is another source of high gratification to the devout believer. As soon as the enmity of our depraved hearts is conquered, and as soon as friendship is established between us and God, he graciously allows us to approach him with filial confidence and affection. To Him we may look for comfort in the hour of sorrow and persecution; to Him we may tell our complaints; and in his bosom pour out our grief, with a certainty that it will be mitigated or removed. Indeed there is no demonstration of sincere love, which will be withheld from them that walk uprightly^{hh}.

And who can adequately set forth the peace and joy which believers possess in communion with their God? Is it doubted whether such a privilege can belong to mortals, as to hold spiritual intercourse with Heaven? Scripture, and the experience of good men, put the matter beyond all reasonable doubt. God's own words will sufficiently vouch for the fact: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." Yes, in the ordinances of his house he manifests himself graciously unto his servants. The Prophet Isaiah asserted, from his own knowledge of God's

^h 2 Cor. vi. 16.

^{hh} Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

ⁱ ib. xxv. 14.

dealings with the Church, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways^k." And St. John, in order to establish the belief of the members of the infant Church in the Divinity of Christ, and to animate them to patient suffering in his cause, exhorted them to seek communion with himself and the other Apostles, that they might share with them the distinguished favour shewn to those eminent servants of Christ: "For truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ^l." To be permitted thus to know God as a Father and friend; yea, to hold communion with him, by his Spirit dwelling in their hearts, is that common privilege of the saints, which causes them, even amidst the sharpest trials, "to rejoice in the Lord, and to joy in the God of their salvation."

4. That nothing may be wanting to console the faithful, and to encourage them "to press forward to the mark for the prize of their high calling," God grants them a foretaste of the blessedness of heaven. That they may be stimulated to seek the good land itself, they are allowed to taste, by anticipation, its fruits, in that measure which will conduce to their spiritual improvement. When faith is in vigorous exercise, the Christian ascends the top of Pisgah^m, and from thence obtains a view of the Promised Land. And, if some transient glimpses of heaven minister such delight as earth with all its charms cannot boast of, what ecstasy, what rapturous bliss will the enjoyment of Paradise itself afford! There, what was seen below, as through a glass darkly, will be clearly known and appreciated; and every dis-

^k Isa. lxiv. 5.

^l 1 John i. 3.

^m Deut. xxxiv. 1.

covery, which glorified saints will make of the matchless love of God in redemption through Christ, will open fresh sources of pleasure through all eternity.

But our Lord affirms, that even now the immediate effect of faith in his name is such abundant satisfaction of soul, as extinguishes all vehement desires after any thing on earth, and causes new consolations to spring up to an overflowing fulness; till the believer's wants are entirely removed, and all his wishes completely gratified in the enjoyment of eternal life:—"Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life".

Such are some of the principal and lasting sources of religious pleasures enjoyed by the disciples of the crucified Jesus. From a view of their nature, it is evident they stand quite independent of the world, for every thing worthy of being called real satisfaction; and enjoy much happiness, in spite of every disappointment which it occasions.

Besides, there are seasons when God sees fit "to fill them with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This high degree of spiritual delight he usually vouchsafes previous to severe trials, or when they are preparing for more extensive usefulness. At such times, God condescends, in a remarkable manner, to be their "exceeding great joy." There are, moreover, seasons of devotion, both in public and private, when the souls of the righteous, emancipated from their fleshly bondage, mount upward, on the wings of faith, and catch a portion of the spirit and the happiness diffused through the inhabitants of heaven.

Surely, upon a review of the Christian's privileges,

^a John iv. 14.

we shall be justified in applying to him the words used by Moses, to describe the enviable felicity of the Jewish Nation in covenant with God :—" Happy art thou, O Israel ! Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord ! The eternal God is thy refuge ; and underneath are the everlasting arms °."

° Deut. xxxiii. 27—29.

LECTURE XXIX.

ON THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

1 John i. 3, 4.—*That which we have seen and heard, declares us unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us : and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

THE original word, which is translated *saints* in the New Testament, signifies *holy ones* ; that is, godly persons, who are sanctified in heart, and, by virtue of the holy principle which influences them, live in obedience to God, and in the habitual pursuit of righteousness^a. They are such, not by a mere profession of the Gospel, but by faith, uniting them to Christ, and enabling them "to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord^b." As things under the Law were esteemed holy when set apart to the service of God ; so the people of the Most High God, being called out of this profane and wicked world, and consecrated to the peculiar service of the Lord, are justly denominated saints and holy ones ; the sanctity of their affections, and the general purity of their lives and conversation, manifesting their relation and likeness to God, the fountain of all holiness.

It is not, therefore, an outward vocation, but an internal principle of righteousness which constitutes

^a 1 Cor. i. 2.

^b John xv. 4—8.

a man a saint. And those who truly become such characters, are first regenerated by the Spirit of the Lord, whose heavenly "workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them^c." They "are washed, sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God^d:" in whom also, after that they believe, they are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the inheritance* they are called to possess, which is "incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away^f." Secondly, they are as much distinguished from the rest of mankind by their holy conduct, as by the privileges which peculiarly belong to them; for, as God, who hath chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world^g, is holy, so are they holy in all manner of conversation; approving things which are excellent, wishing to be "sincere and without offence until the day of Christ, and to be filled with all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God^h."

Unspeakably great are the blessings which belong "to the saints and to the household of God." There are given to them "exceeding great and precious promises," which partly relate to their comfort here, and partly to the glory reserved for them in heaven. But no one of the privileges bestowed on them gives us a more exalted view of their dignity and happiness, even on earth, than that which is mentioned in the words of St. John: "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our

^c Eph. ii. 10.

^d 1 Cor. vi. 11.

^e Eph. i. 13, 14.

^f 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

^g Eph. i. 4.

^h Phil. i. 10, 11.

fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

Here the saints are represented as having communication one with another, as well as with God and his Son Jesus Christ.

1. They have communion with the whole Church of Christ, and with all his faithful people, however widely dispersed throughout the earth. Neither time nor place can break asunder that bond of brotherhood and union, by which the saints are related and joined to each other: "for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, whether we are bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many." There is, therefore, a general sympathy and affection, "a supplication for all saints," which every disciple of Jesus must maintain, to evince the lively interest he feels in the afflictions and happiness of that great family of God, which is composed of the universal Church of Christ on earth.

But they are favoured with a nearer and more intimate communion with the saints living in the same Church with themselves. "If we walk in the light, then we have fellowship one with another¹;" as they had with the Apostles, who received their doctrine, and conformed to the precepts which they taught: we all enjoy the benefit of the same religious ordinances, all partake of the same consolatory promises, all are endowed with the same graces of the Divine Spirit—faith, hope, joy, and love, "and endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace²;"—all are branches of Christ, the true

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 12—15.

¹ 1 John i. 7.

² Eph. iv. 3.

vine, from whom we derive spiritual life and vigour, all hold the same "Head, from which all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God¹." A holy society thus divinely constituted, having been alike baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, making the same confession of faith, hearing the same word and doctrine preached, worshipping at the same altar, receiving the same memorials of their Saviour's dying love, and partaking of the same benefits of redemption, should feel a cordial attachment to one another, strive to promote each other's temporal and spiritual welfare, comfort one another in sorrow and trial, rejoice in their mutual prosperity, and consider any good or evil which may happen to the least of its members, as affecting, in some degree, all the rest^m.

Such a communion amongst Christians is beautifully described by the Psalmist: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermoreⁿ."

2. The saints of God living in the Church militant are in communion with departed saints in glory.

The mystical union between Christ and his Church is the true foundation of that communion which one member has with another; since all the members live and increase by the same influence which they

¹ Col. ii. 19.

^m 1 Cor. xii. 26.

ⁿ Psalm cxxxiii. 1—3.

receive from him. Death, which is only a separation of the soul from the body, cannot break off the fellowship of the saints on earth with those in heaven; because the foundation, on which it is built, remaineth for ever. Death does not destroy the communion which subsisted between them on earth; because it improves that principle of holiness which first joined them together. Hence the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews thus addresses those who are called to the Christian faith: "Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant^o."

This communion of the Church militant with the Church triumphant in heaven, which is founded on the mystical union of Christ the Head, and the incessant care with which he preserves the different members of his vast family, and the perpetual connexion which subsists between them, as partakers both here and hereafter of the same salvation^{oo}, is not without its advantages. That the saints on earth communicate with those in heaven, in hope of that happiness which they actually enjoy, is evident; because, whilst they continue here, they have the Spirit of God given to them, as an earnest of that felicity which they will most certainly obtain hereafter^p.

We must not, however, with the Church of Rome, pray to departed saints; nor address them as media-

^o Heb. xii. 22—25.

^{oo} Eph. i. 10.

^p 2 Cor. i. 21. 22. Eph. i. 13, 14.

tors, nor offer them religious worship, which is an error, as dangerous in itself, as it is affronting to God, whose authority is dishonoured by it^a.

Yet we are exhorted to respect the memory of pious Christians who have died in the faith and fear of God, and to imitate most closely the bright and holy example which they have left us: "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises^c."

The saints in glory above most probably hold communion with the Church of true believers on earth, by sympathizing with them in the sorrows of their pilgrimage state, and by expressing the most fervent wishes that they may finish their course with joy, and receive the crown of glory which will be given to all who endure unto the end.

At least, St. Paul calls on the saints below to consider themselves as "encompassed about with witnesses" as innumerable as the drops of water in a cloud; who bear a most decided testimony to the fidelity of God, and the efficacious power of faith^d. This great multitude seems to look down from heaven; nay, to come from thence, and to surround us, in order that they may bear testimony to the righteous cause in which we are engaged, and, as spectators of our conduct, animate us to persevere in the same arduous, perilous, and honourable combat in which they themselves have gained so blessed a victory.

Let us, then, realize the presence of the Church triumphant as spectators of our conflict, and as calling upon us "to be faithful unto death;" that

^a Deut. vi. 13. Matt. iv. 10. ^c Heb. vi. 11, 12. ^d ib. xii. 1.

we may share in the bliss of their exalted state, and join with them in everlasting anthems of praise for our redemption". And, above all, let us not forget "to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds:"

3. Further; the saints on earth have not only communion with those possessing the same nature, but also with those Divine Persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who are more infinitely exalted above the highest saints, than they are above the unbelieving world in which they live. As all who truly received the doctrines of the Apostles held communion with them, and as their fellowship was with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, it follows that all the Saints of God, in every age under the Gospel dispensation, have likewise a real communion with God the Father, and with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, however despised the Children of God may be by the rest of men, or however humble and poor their lot may be in this life, yet they enjoy honours with which others have no manner of concern. Their communion with the Father of Lights is a privilege which words cannot adequately express.

Their communion with God commences at the time of their regeneration, which holy state qualifies them to hold intercourse with him". "Being made partakers of the Divine nature", He regards them as his spiritual children, and grants them the spirit of

" Rev. v. 9—13.

" Gal. iv. 6, 7.

" Heb. xii. 2—4.

" 2 Pet. i. 4.

adoption; and henceforth they become "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ of the glory which shall be revealed."^a "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"^b A sacred union subsists betwixt God and his people, to whom he allows free access and intercourse with himself. He dwells in them by the Holy Ghost, who communicates his will to their minds^c. He pays the greatest attention to their wants, and supplies them with wisdom and strength suited to their trials. He comforts them in trouble, delivers them in the hour of danger, and makes all things, even the most adverse and afflictive, work together for their good^d. He hears their prayers, accepts their services, and gives them the sweetest tokens of his loving-kindness. He assures them of his favour while on earth; and promises to receive them at death into the mansions of blessedness, which he has prepared for them^e.

On the other hand, the Children of God maintain a delightful communion with their heavenly Father, by means of his own appointment. Divine ordinances are instituted to refresh and invigorate their souls. They "wait for his loving-kindness in the midst of his temple;" there they sit under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to their taste^f; there he displays the riches of his grace, and they commune with him as their everlasting friend. They pour out their souls before him, tell him of all their sorrows, and obtain the requisite consolation. So long as they act conformably to his will, and seek their felicity in his favour, he confirms his love towards them, by causing them to "walk in the light

^a Rom. viii. 17—19.^b 1 John iii. 1.^c 1 Cor. ii. 10—16.^d Rom. viii. 28.^e John xiv. 1—4.^f Song of Solomon, ii. 3.

of his countenance:" "but if his Children forsake his law, and walk not in his judgments; if they break his statutes, and keep not his commandments; then will he visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, his loving-kindness will he not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail*."

4. The saints have communion with Christ. Believers, having been broken off from the common stock of corrupt nature, are grafted into Christ, the true vine, of which they are branches. And, as the branches of a tree derive sap and nourishment from the stock to which they are joined, so do Christians receive life from Christ, whose spirit quickens, and whose word supports them continually". Being conformed to his image, "they take up his cross, deny themselves, and follow him in the regeneration." And he forms an union with them, as real as it is remarkable. He has taken upon him our nature; he has taken upon him our sins, and the curse due unto them; while we all have received, of His fulness, grace for grace^f. By faith we obtain an interest in his salvation, and are strengthened to go on our way rejoicing in hope unto the end. He sympathizes with his saints in affliction, assuring them that "his grace shall be sufficient for them, and that his strength shall be made perfect in their weakness^g." Finally, he promises that "they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand^h." Whoever, therefore, abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Sonⁱ. "And our Saviour prays, that all who shall believe in him may be one, as the Father is one in him, and he in the

* Psalm lxxxix. 15—34.

" John xv. 4, 5.

^f John i. 16.

^g 2 Cor. xii. 9.

^h John x. 27—30.

ⁱ 2 John 9.

Father; that they also may be one in both, and be made perfect in one^k.”

The saints have “fellowship with Christ in his sufferings; for unto them it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake^l.” They have communion with him as their elder brother, partaking of the same nature as themselves^m; as members of his body, nourished and preserved by his constant care. Thus “God hath called us unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lordⁿ.”

5. The Saints have communion with the Holy Ghost. He is the author of that new birth unto righteousness, of which they have been made the subjects. He has wrought in their souls, faith and hope and joy, and every one of those graces which distinguish them from the rest of mankind. They are sanctified by his operations; and thus become saints; and, through his holy guidance and influence, they endure unto the end, and “make their calling and election sure.” St. Paul prayed devoutly for the Corinthians; and thus teaches us also to pray for ourselves, that “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, might be with them all^o.”

Besides, the fellowship which Christians maintain with God and Christ is through the Holy Spirit. He is given to them, as “the Spirit of adoption;” and by him they become joint-heirs with Christ: “and because they are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father:” so that they are no more servants, but sons; and if sons, then heirs of God, through Christ^p.

^k John xvii. 20—24.

^l Phil. i. 29.

^m Heb. ii. 16—18.

ⁿ 1 Cor. i. 9.

^o 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

^p Rom. viii. 15. Gal. iv. 6, 7.

Further; the souls of devout Christians are made the habitation of God and of his Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Ghost, whose presence cannot be wanting where the Father and Son dwell: for “know ye not,” saith Saint Paul, “that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you^a.”

6. The saints have communion also with the holy angels in heaven. The angels of God have, on various occasions, shewn that they feel a lively interest in whatever concerns the glory of God, the triumphs of Christ's kingdom, and the happiness and salvation of mankind. They foretold the birth of John, the forerunner of Christ^c; they announced to the Virgin the conception of the Saviour of the world^d; they sang an anthem of praise at the nativity of Christ^e; they conveyed the soul of Lazarus into Abraham's bosom^f; they appeared unto Christ from heaven, in his agony, to strengthen him^g; they opened the prison doors, and brought forth the Apostles^h; and, “at the end of the world, they will sever the wicked from among the just, and gather together the elect of God from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the otherⁱ.”

The angels perform the kindest services for the Children of God: “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” They commiserate the lost condition of those who have strayed from God, and sincerely rejoice at their restoration to his favour. Our Saviour assures us, that “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth^j.” The angels, who are the messengers of

^a 1 Cor. iii. 16.

^c Luke i. 13.

^d ib. i. 26, 33.

^e Luke ii. 9—15.

^f ib. xvi. 22.

^g ib. xxii. 43.

^h Acts v. 19.

ⁱ Matt. xiii. 49. xxiv. 31.

^j Luke xv. 10.

God, bear a near relation to mankind, and are called the angels of men. "Take heed," saith Christ, when admonishing the world not to injure his people, "that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven^b."

7. A belief of the communion of saints should call forth the strongest expressions of gratitude to God. Surely it is meet that they who partake of so great a benefit should make a devout and cheerful acknowledgment of it. We cannot but admit that they "are exceeding great and precious promises, by which we become partakers of the Divine nature." How inconceivable is the dignity which the saints attain to, in being called the sons of God! What an honour, that they should be allowed to have fellowship with God, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and to receive blessings from each, expressive of the Divine love for their souls! What a privilege to have the Father and the Son dwelling within them, by the Holy Ghost!

Moreover, God hath called them to the fellowship of the angels and archangels, of cherubims and seraphims, to the glorious company of the Apostles, to the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, to the noble army of Martyrs, to the holy Church militant on earth and triumphant in heaven.

Each of the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus will break out in admiration of the Divine condescension and goodness; saying, "Who am I, O Lord God! and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto^{bb}?" "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake^c."

^b Matt. xviii. 10. ^{bb} 2 Sam. vii. 18. ^c Psalm cxv. 1.

8. A belief of the communion of saints will have a tendency to promote in us a desire after holiness of life. How can we ever expect to hold communion with God, unless we are sanctified in our affections, and strive to walk unblameably before him in love? There can be no fellowship with God, without there is some likeness to him, whose nature is infinitely holy, and whose actions are just and right. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" "If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another. But if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Let us do nothing, then, to interrupt so happy an union with God; but endeavour to maintain and perpetuate it, by a life uniformly devoted to his glory.

9. A belief of the communion of saints is a foundation for joy. What happiness can exceed that which arises from the favour of God, which we receive when he is reconciled to us in Christ Jesus? St. John and his fellow-labourers had been blessed with the experience of God's love to them, and they wished that their brethren might share with themselves the sacred pleasures which they enjoyed:—"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

In the same spirit, we assure all men that nothing can render them so happy as communion with God.

* 2 Cor. vi. 14—17.

* 1 John i. 6—8.

If sinners would but forsake lying vanities, and pray for grace "to serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear," they might obtain fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, and participate the felicity of the saints, and of the household of God.

10. A belief of the communion of saints should excite in us an ardent affection for those who bear the image of Christ, and are endued with the gracious influences of the Spirit of Truth. We love those who are related to us by the ties of nature: but no relation is so strong as that which is spiritual; no union so lasting as that which is eternal. Mutual love and kindness, therefore, should constantly subsist amongst the children of God on earth^f, who will be associated for ever in heaven, as partakers of the same crown of glory, that fadeth not away.

Christians will respect also the memory and imitate the example of departed saints; and wait with patience, until death shall join them to the "general assembly and Church of the first-born;" with whom they will unite in saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever^g!"

11. Those who have not communion with God, and with the Church in heaven and on earth, are truly miserable. Sinners, you turn away from the society of God, and angels, and good men, to unite yourselves to the Devil, with whom you seek communion, and to whom you pay a blind obedience. You join with wicked spirits in affronting God, despising his just authority, and provoking his wrath. "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father

^f John v. 1. John xiii. 34, 35.

^g Rev. v. 12—14.

ye will do^h." Such a league with the prince of darkness must be destructive of your happiness, if it be not broken off; "for, lo! they that are far off from God shall perishⁱ."

Pray, then, that the Spirit of the Lord would convince you of the guilt of sin, and incline you to forsake it; that he would convert your souls, and dispose you to practise righteousness: then will you have joy and peace in believing; and, in common with all the saints, you will have communion with the Father and the Son, with the Church militant and triumphant; and, at length, be brought into the more immediate presence of God, "where is fullness of joy; and to his right-hand, where there are pleasures for evermore^k."

^h John viii. 44.

ⁱ Psalm lxxiii. 27.

^k ib. xvi. 11.

LECTURE XXX.

ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

2 Tim. i. 10.—*But now is made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.*

SOME distinct traces of a belief in the existence of the soul, after the dissolution of the body, seem to have been found in almost every country, where the inhabitants have been at all polished by civilization and science: nor are faint vestiges of the doctrine wanting even among the most savage nations, on whom the light of science and of Revelation has not yet dawned.

In some Pagan countries the immortality of the soul is made an article of religious faith: in others,

its mere admission possesses considerable influence in directing the conduct of the people.

The fanciful notion of the transmigration of souls into different bodies, entertained by the Indians, Egyptians, and others, seems to argue their persuasion, that the mind does survive the dissolution of the body, and that it exists continually in a state of pleasure or pain.

Whether the sentiments held by unchristianized nations, respecting the immortality of the soul, were derived from the light of nature, or immediately borrowed from the Oracles of God, or from the dictates of both, it is not our business to decide. Suffice it to observe, that a great majority of wise and reflecting men, in every age, have seriously believed the doctrine. And, though the craft and power of infidelity have been exerted to overthrow the faith of mankind in this particular, yet they have not been able to succeed; for it is still currently received and openly avowed, by all who submit to the word of God as their guide in the concerns of religion, and by many others who do not walk according to its light.

1. The immortality of the soul is certainly taught in the Scriptures, as an article of faith, which cannot be disbelieved, without calling in question the truth of God, and incurring his displeasure. It must, however, be confessed, that the important doctrine was not so fully revealed under the Law, as it is now, under the Gospel. It pleased God but partially to unfold this, as well as several other doctrines of the highest consequence to believers, in the first ages of the Church; reserving the more complete discovery of them for the coming and kingdom of Christ.

Still, we maintain that a careful examination of those passages in the Old Testament which bear

directly or indirectly upon the subject, will shew that there is no ground whatever for the cavils which infidels have raised against the inspiration of Moses and the Prophets, as if they did not mention the doctrine, or but obscurely hint at it in their writings.

2. We meet with early intimations of God's purpose to recompense the righteous with a glorious immortality. The translation of Enoch from earth to heaven was an event of great importance to the age in which he lived, and a standing admonition to future ages and generations. It taught them, and it reminds us and all mankind, that God is not an unconcerned spectator of men's conduct; but "that his penetrating eyes run to and fro throughout the earth, beholding the good and the evil;" and that they who honour him will be highly esteemed, but those who forsake him will be made to feel his indignation*.

Could the antediluvian sinners fail to draw such inferences from the removal of Enoch? Could they help concluding, that his assumption was an intelligible proof of God's favour towards him; and that "being taken away from the evil to come," he was gone to inhabit the realms of blissful repose? Nor could so remarkable a lesson be lost upon the descendants of Noah, who would preserve the remembrance of that interesting fact amongst their posterity, by oral communications, or traditionary records, handed down from father to son. The translation of Enoch to glory will most probably account for those narrations of brave and favoured persons having been taken to heaven, which are found in Pagan mythologies.

3. In that sublime passage of Holy Writ in which he avows his belief of a resurrection, Job, no

* 1 Sam. ii. 30.

doubt, intended to convey an idea of man's immortality beyond the grave:—"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me^b." Such decisive language argues, in whatever age Job lived, whether before or after Moses, that a belief of the Resurrection was by no means strange or uncommon in his day. And for what other conceivable purpose are men to rise from the dead, except to give an account of their conduct to God; in order that, as he assures us, "the wicked may go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal^c." The belief, then, of a general "resurrection of the just and the unjust" seems to involve in itself, as a necessary consequence, the immortality of man; unless it can be thought to be possible that God should raise us from the dead with a view to our annihilation;—a supposition as absurd, as it is contradictory to the current declarations of Scripture.

4. The royal prophet, David, when speaking of Christ's victory over death and the grave, and his exaltation to the right-hand of God, expressed his hope of the Resurrection, and of everlasting life, in terms too plain to be misunderstood: "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right-hand there are pleasures for evermore^d." Here he

^b Job xix. 25—28. ^c Mat. xxv. 46. ^d Ps. xvi. 9—11.

affirms not only his expectation of being raised from the dead, but of partaking also of immortal glory in the world to come.

5. To pass over many quotations which might be gleaned from the writings of Moses and the other parts of the Old Testament^{dd}, we may briefly advert to the prediction of Daniel, which speaks explicitly concerning the difference which the future state will make between the condition of good and bad men :—
 “ And many of them which sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever^e.”

The Patriarchs, then, would communicate the doctrine to their children and contemporaries : they, in turn, would convey it to their descendants : and the Prophets, successively, would keep alive the remembrance of it, by their predictions : and thus the knowledge of it would be perpetuated from age to age in the Church, until the appearance of Christ, “ who, at his coming, abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel^f.” We may then safely conclude, with the framers of the Articles, that, in reference to the doctrine in question, “ the Old Testament is not contrary to the New : for both in the Old and New Testament, everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and man. Wherefore, they are not to be heard, who feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises^g.”

^{dd} Isa. xxvi. 19. Ezek. xxxvii. 1—15.

^e 2 Tim. i. 10.

^f Dan. xii. 2, 3.

^g Article VII.

6. When we examine the light thrown upon this subject by the New Testament, it is evident that the immortality of the soul, and the belief of its un-ending existence in happiness or misery, had a considerable influence upon the conduct and hopes of the saints in the first ages of the Christian Church. We find both Christ and his Apostles constantly directing their hearers to the writings of the Old Testament, in order to demonstrate that the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, and of future retribution, were so clearly made known to them, that even a messenger from the invisible world could not have given them a stronger conviction of their reality, than they were able to derive from those sources of knowledge of which they were already in possession. The reply made by Abraham to the rich man in hell, who entreated that Lazarus might be sent to warn his brethren of the danger of persisting in sin, proves the truth of our affirmation respecting the ancient Church: "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead^g."

Christ reproved the Disciples as they were going to Emmaus, because they did not give full credit to the predictions of the Old Testament, respecting his death, resurrection, and subsequent glory, and all those points which involved the certainty of the eternal world. "O fools," said he, "and slow of heart to believe all the Prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into glory? And, beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded to them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself^h."

When our Lord argued with the Pharisees in vindication of the resurrection, he declared, that the

^g Luke xvi. 31.

^h ib. xxiv. 25, 28.

righteous will not be confined for ever in the grave, but shall rise again to inherit immortal bliss:—"As touching the dead, that they rise; have ye not read in the book of Moses, how, in the bush, God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham; and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living¹."

Moreover, it is clear the Patriarchs and Prophets cordially believed what they delivered to others concerning this matter; because they acted agreeably to the testimony which they bare. It is recorded, that, "by faith, Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. By faith, Abraham sojourned in the Land of Promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for a city which hath foundations; whose builder and maker is God. By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith, he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off; and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth²."

There are several positive declarations of our

¹ Mark xii. 25—27.

² Heb. xi. 7—28.

Saviour in the New Testament, which enforce the same doctrine. We can but lay a few of them before the reader.—“This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day^k.” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life^l.”

St. Paul, in his address to the Corinthian Church, confirms the sentiment, in the most sublime language: “Behold, I shew you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory^m.” The following passages of Sacred Writ, which may be referred to, shew that the doctrine of the soul's immortality is laid open with great clearness by the inspired penmen of the New Testament, who speak of it as the joy and consolation of Christians^{mm}.

7. Nor does the light of reason, in its legitimate exercise, refuse its testimony to the truth; which though not requisite to establish the point, nevertheless leads us to expect the immortality of the soul. If reason be used in subservience to faith, not as a

^k John vi. 40.

^l ib. v. 24.

^m 1 Cor. xv. 51—55.

^{mm} John v. 29. xi. 23—27.

perfect guide, but as an auxiliary in the present inquiry, its friendly aid should neither be undervalued, nor kept out of sight.

8. Reason, then, would infer the immortality of the soul, from its nature and immense value. The soul is that part of us which alone deserves to be considered as especially entering into our ideas of man. The body is entirely governed and animated by its agency. Let but the mind desert its habitation, and the body immediately becomes a lifeless corpse, devoid of all power, thought, or motion.

But the soul survives; and its faculties are vigorous when it is separated from its former companion. The mind, when enlightened by the Spirit of Truth, enables us to contemplate the works of God, to make some discoveries relative to his Divine nature, and the mode of acceptance with Him through Christ our Mediator, and to render him acceptable service. Can it be supposed that such faculties were given with no other design than just to raise in us desires after heaven; and then to disappoint our expectations, by their being buried in the grave of oblivion? Such an opinion is quite contrary to all our notions of God, who proposes, by all his works, some object which is worthy of himself. Can the mind, then, be endowed with the noblest powers in vain? No: if duly improved by grace here, they will find full exercise and gratification hereafter, in contemplating the infinite glory and wisdom of God, who gave them.

9. The fitness of good men for so exalted a condition is no mean argument for indulging the expectation, that immortality will crown their pious labours. Heaven is the recompence with which God is pleased, in mercy, to reward the faith and obedience of his

devoted servants. But the present life is obviously nothing but a school of trial and probation, and preparation for eternity ; in which, through a right discipline, men may acquire those holy dispositions, which will qualify them to love and to serve God more perfectly, in another state of existence, beyond the grave.

Now, is it likely that Jehovah would assist his rational creatures in making such great advances towards a state of perfection, if he intended they should never attain it—never arrive at the object of all their exertions ? Would he present the cup of eternal bliss, and then instantly tantalize his servants, by dashing it away, untasted, from their lips ? No : it is much more agreeable to every dictate of reason, to conclude, that they, who have been favoured in this life with manifestations of His love, will experience higher demonstrations of it in that world of glory, where God unveils his face, and smiles with complacency on his beloved children.

10. The great design of man's creation warrants a hope of his immortality. He was formed to worship and honour God here, and enjoy him eternally hereafter. Surely, then, God, who does nothing in vain, did not impress on man his own image and likeness on purpose to destroy his remembrance almost as soon as he is born : which must be the case with a large portion of the human race who die in infancy, if they do not rise from the grave, and exist in a future state. Reason conducts the mind to a far different conclusion ; and points out man as the only being in the world who is the rightful heir of immortality. But if the memorial of those who die prematurely is to perish with them in the grave, then are they more short-lived and frail than most other ani-

mals, which, after a certain period of existence, die, to live no more for ever.

11. Wicked men, then, can derive no consolation from the assurances, which both reason and Revelation afford, of a future eternal existence. Annihilation, which is the favourite dream of infidels, is proved to be a delusion—a broken reed, on which a man cannot lean without inflicting on himself the deepest wound^a! Away with every refuge of lies! and do not, in order to give the reins to criminal desires and passions, defraud yourselves of the joys of a blissful immortality! Soon the weak barrier, which separates this world from the next, will be broken down by the hand of Death; and then eternity, with all its glorious and dread realities, will be displayed before you! And will it then be a matter for exultation, to reflect, that, in despite of the convincing lights of Scripture and reason, and the admonitions of conscience, you have rioted in the indulgence of guilty pleasures, and thus, by a sad perversion of mind, have forfeited the bright inheritance which will be assigned to the righteous?

12. Let all consider the awful grandeur of the destiny that awaits them;—on the one side, endless woe to be endured—on the other, everlasting bliss to be enjoyed! Are we then, after death, to live for ever, in one of these extremely-opposite conditions? Yes: at no remote period, “the trumpet shall sound,” and summon your attendance at the tribunal of Christ: and there you will be judged according to the deeds you have done in this life; and, afterwards, take your station for ever, either at the right-hand of God, or at an immense distance from him in the regions of unceasing misery.

^a Isa. xxxvi. 6.

Let, then, the terrors and the joys of eternity be constantly used, as an incentive to diligence in your Christian calling. A meetness for the heavenly world is indispensably necessary. God is righteous ; heaven is holy ; and all its joys and employments are of a similar description.

You “must be born again” to a spiritual life, manifested by faith and purity and love and every holy disposition, before you can share in the felicity of God’s kingdom of grace below, or of his kingdom of glory above^m. Do not fancy that there is another or better way to heaven ; but walk, by Divine assistance, in “that narrow path” which conducts its travellers to “the presence of God, where is fulness of joy, and to his right-hand, where are pleasures for evermore.”

13. Christian ! the days of your pilgrimage will soon pass away—to be succeeded by an eternity, the duration of which cannot be measured. The blessedness of that state will be an everlasting recompence, which neither your faith nor obedience could ever merit or deserve. Think upon “the crown of glory that fadeth not away ;” and let the honour of obtaining it be ascribed to Christ, who purchased it for you, with his blood. Be it your constant study to evince the strongest marks of gratitude and love to the Saviour, “by always abounding in the work of the Lord ; forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lordⁿ.”

^m John iii. 3.

ⁿ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

LECTURE XXXI.

MAN'S ACCOUNTABLENESS TO GOD FOR HIS TALENTS
AND CONDUCT.

Rom. xiv. 12. *So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God.*

INFIDELITY aims a deadly blow at every thing most valuable to man, both in his present state of existence, and in that which he will arrive at, after "mortality shall be swallowed up of life."

By attempting to erase from the mind all notions of our responsibility to God, unbelievers do as much as they can to poison the springs of human consolation, to destroy all moral order and obedience, and to render mankind truly wretched, by robbing them of the pleasing assurance of a state of future blessedness. 'Does the Great Eternal (say they), "who ruleth among the armies of heaven," deign to pay the least regard to the petty affairs of erring mortals? Will "He visit their offences with the rod" of his displeasure? Does He require homage from the frail inhabitants of the earth, when He is surrounded with the adorations of the heavenly host? No; He is too busy with the concerns of the celestial world, to interfere with the transactions of men; and too rich in compassion, to punish either their flagrant crimes or more venial transgressions.'

The success which has attended such atheistical reasonings, is but too apparent! Wicked men, impatient of the restraints of the Gospel, have greedily swallowed a bait so palatable to their depraved taste; and the consequence has been, that torrents of impiety have deluged the world. This should not ex-

cite astonishment; for if Satan can but once persuade men to believe that God takes no cognizance of their actions, they will not scruple to give full scope to the vicious desires of their hearts.

It is not difficult to trace the source from whence opinions so false and dangerous proceed. They arise from a mistaken judgment of the character of God, and from a wish to deny his rightful dominion over his creatures. It is the natural pride and independence of fallen man which make him feel so much uneasiness under the equitable government of his Creator; although facts prove, that an entire freedom from religious and moral restraints is incompatible with his well-being.

How different is this lawless temper from the humility and obedience which the Gospel dictates; which disposes the believer to bow, with the utmost deference, to the authority of God as his Sovereign, to whom he has sworn allegiance! Knowing that we must hereafter account for our behaviour to Him, let us not suffer ourselves to be led away by the devices of the impious and profane, "but follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness^a."

The objections of infidelity against the rewards and punishments of another life will be most successfully combated, by establishing the truth of the position, that man is an accountable creature, answerable for the abuse of that free agency which God has given him. The reasonableness of this doctrine will appear from the following considerations.

1. The creation of man affords no mean presumption of his responsibility; and none but an infidel will dispute the right which it vests in God, to exact

^a 1 Tim. vi. 11, 12.

our best services. The Almighty called us into existence, in order that we might admire his unequalled perfections, glorify his name by a pious life, and afterwards inherit eternally his blissful kingdom. "This people have I formed for myself: they shall shew forth my praise^b." Jehovah derives satisfaction from the worship of his intelligent creatures: "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God^c." "Yea, from the relation which subsists betwixt himself and us, he founds a strong and irresistible claim to our affectionate devotion. "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if, then, I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts^d." To prove, that, as the Moral Governor of the Universe, he is not equally unconcerned whether men wantonly infringe his laws or render him the service which they are bound to perform, he has given this commission to his Ministers: "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with them; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him^e."

2. The condition in which we are placed argues our accountableness to God. In this life, man is evidently not in an independent, but in a probationary state; where there is such a mixture of good and evil, so many dangers and temptations, that constant vigilance is requisite, to guard against the malignant designs of his spiritual adversaries. He must watch and pray, lest he enter into temptation: he must *bring his passions and appetites under the controul*

^a Isa. xliii. 21. ^c Psalm l. 23. ^d Mal. i. 6. ^e Isa. iii. 10, 11.

of religion; if, indeed, he would overcome the world, or obtain "the crown of glory that fadeth not away." Fixed, as we confessedly are, in a state of trial; where, from the prevalence of vice, we can never hope to escape the attacks of the world, the flesh, and the devil; let us ask for Divine aid, to enable us manfully to resist every assault, and to persevere in righteousness, until we "receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls^f."

3. The faculties and talents we possess are so many vouchers, to assure us that we are answerable to God for our behaviour. Man is the glory of the creation; principally, because he most strongly resembles the Deity^{ff}. Besides, he only, amongst a great number of beings possessed of life, is blessed with the inestimable gifts of speech and reason. The rest of the works of Jehovah, both animate and inanimate, silently speak his praise; but man only can rationally proclaim his wonders, contemplate his inimitable works and perfections, and render him the adoration which he deserves.

Can even the most cold-hearted scepticism suppose that endowments so precious were given in vain? or that they were bestowed merely for the limited span of this frail life, and then are to be consigned, with the corruptible part of man, to the grave? Is man, who is so well qualified to be a subject of praise or blame, of honour or disgrace, to go down to the chambers of death, like the brutes which perish, without rising again to give an account of himself, whether he has done good or evil? We answer, No; for the very endowments of his mind, the various opportunities which he has of moral improvement, the consciousness which he possesses of right and wrong, and the expectation

^f 1 Pet. i. 9.

^{ff} Gen. i. 26, 27.

which he forms of immortality ; these, when taken collectively, are almost sufficient to demonstrate a future existence, where the bad will meet with punishment ; and the good, reward.

Surely, then, no reflecting person will be indifferent about his conduct here, upon which so much depends hereafter. With heaven and hell before us, will it not be the most pitiable act of insanity to waste our talents ; or to hide them, as the unprofitable servant did, in a napkin^c ? What ! shall we wantonly fling away the only opportunity of gaining endless glory ? If we thus trifle away the day of grace, the exclamation will soon be extorted from us, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved : " but if we diligently apply ourselves to the great concern " of working out our salvation with fear and trembling," our Judge will applaud us, saying, " Well done, good and faithful servants ! enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

4. The fact of God's having given a law to man for the due regulation of his life and conduct, supposes him to be a moral agent, responsible for his actions. Laws impose an obligation to obedience on those who live under them : and they are enacted for the purpose of punishing vice, encouraging virtue, and securing to all their particular rights. They commend and protect the good ; but visit the man who breaks them, with fines, imprisonment, and death.

As a subject is under the government of his sovereign, so all men are subject to the authority of God ; who will shew favour to the obedient, but pursue transgressors with signal destruction^d.

This view of the matter entirely destroys the

^c Luke xix. 20—28.

^d 1 Tim. i. 9, 10.

atheistical conceit of man's being at liberty to do what he chooses, without fear of consequences; and convicts, of actual rebellion against God, those who arrogantly say, "What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him^h?"

As ever we tender the favour of God, let us cast away all proud thoughts of setting up our own independence; and submit ourselves to Him, "in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our waysⁱ." A life devoted to His glory will secure lasting peace and satisfaction; but shame and anguish will, in the end, overtake them that do evil; "for, with God, who will judge every man according to his works, there is no respect of persons."

5. The word of God often reminds us of His intention to reckon with us hereafter, when he will demand a strict account of our whole lives. The Parable of the Talentsⁱⁱ is highly instructive in this respect, and teaches us what will be the final result of negligence or industry, in our spiritual calling. They, who improve, to the best of their ability, the advantages which they have enjoyed, for glorifying their Maker, will receive a gracious recompence, through the merits of our Redeemer; but they who mis-spend their time and opportunities, will be visited with tribulation and wrath, when Christ shall come to judge mankind.

The Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard^k establishes the same truth. It suggests that every one has his work allotted him, in the present state of existence; upon the right performance of which, happiness inconceivable will be awarded him; but that

^h Job xxi. 15.

ⁱ Dan. v. 23.

ⁱⁱ Mat. xxv. 14—31.

^k ib. xx. 1—17.

certain misery, without cessation, will ensue the neglect of it.

Other passages of Scripture confirm the doctrine of man's responsibility to God; of which, a few of the most pertinent will be quoted. "But the Lord shall endure for ever; He hath prepared His throne for judgment, and He shall judge the world in righteousness^{kk}." The wise man inculcates the expediency of reverence and affection towards our Creator, from the consideration of a day of future retribution:—"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil^l." The solemn representation given by our Lord concerning his august appearance to judge the world, is calculated to impress us with the deepest awe:—"When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right-hand, but the goats on the left^{ll}."

And, now, let us seriously ask ourselves the question; Is it at all probable that we were formed in the image of God, brought on this stage of action, gifted with faculties which qualify us to do him acceptable service, if no end worthy of God is to be answered by our existence? Is it at all likely that he should give us a law for the direction of our conduct, and then suffer us to break it with impunity? Has he given us a capacity for enjoying that immortal bliss

^{kk} Ps. ix. 7, 8. ^l Eccles. xii. 13, 14. ^{ll} Mat. xxv. 31—46.

which he has promised, if we obey him ; and shall he be thought capable of not fulfilling his word to his people^m ?—a supposition which is impious in the extreme ; for, whilst it imputes the crime of unfaithfulness to God, it represents him as a Being who is similarly affected by good and evil : and it is directly hostile to the best interests of man, by countenancing vice, and by taking away the most effectual motives for the cultivation of a pious life.

6. It is incumbent on us all, to think frequently on the subject of our responsibility to God. And whenever any thoughts of an opposite kind intrude upon us, inclining us to shake off his just authority over us, they should be instantly repelled, as the wicked suggestions of “ the father of lies,” whose object is, to draw us aside from our duty to God, and to involve us with himself in the guilt and consequences of actual rebellion against Heaven.

It equally behoves us, if we are at all desirous of “ giving up our account with joy, and not with grief,” to live agreeably to the will of God. But where must we repair, to obtain information respecting our duty to him ? Certainly our opinions on this subject are not to be grounded on human judgment ; nor is our regard to the Lord to be measured by the low practices of others : we must appeal to his word, which should be closely studied, and exactly conformed to, if we would know what we ought to do to please him. Therein, every truth which pertains to salvation may be found written, in language brought down to the capacity of the feeblest understanding ; at the same time that it is equally suited to instruct the more learned, in those things which conduce to their everlasting peace.

^m Numb. xxiii. 19.

As, therefore, some acquaintance with the laws of the country in which we dwell is requisite to teach us how to demean ourselves as good citizens and members of society ; so a competent knowledge of the Divine will is indispensably necessary, to the right framing of our lives, and to the fitting us for those felicities which the righteous will hereafter attain.

Now, Holy Writ directs us to believe in Christ, for the pardon of sin ; to apply for the grace of the Spirit, to sanctify our souls, and lead us into all needful truth ; and, finally, by cultivating heavenly dispositions, “ to be looking for, and hasting unto, the coming of the day of God^{mm}.”

Who can doubt, with eternity in view, that such a life is not only the most rational and happy, but also the best preparation for the appearing of the “ Judge of quick and dead ?”

7. Above all, let each individual inquire, What talents has God committed to my care ? and how can I most wisely employ them to His glory, and the advantage of mankind ? There is no one, however mean or lowly his station in society may be, but what has talents entrusted to him ; for the abuse of which, he will be punished at the day of reckoning. Amongst the most important gifts, for which we shall have to account, are, speech, reason, natural and acquired abilities, health, riches, and time.

8. Speech is a valuable faculty, by the aid of which we hold intercourse with our fellow-creatures : but it was given for far nobler purposes, namely, that we might sound forth the honours of God, and engage heartily with others in the vocal worship of his name. Language enables us to converse with each

other about his wonderful operations in creation, providence, and redemption.

What a pity it is that any one should ever debase this noble gift, by blasphemy or oaths, or by allowing his conversation to sink into frivolity, obscenity, calumny, and abuse!

9. Reason is the lamp of the soul. It is a celestial light, when under the controul of God's word and grace, to guide us from the way of error and falsehood and destruction, into the path of righteousness and truth and safety. By its inquisitive powers, we examine and compare things which widely differ in themselves, and thus judge of their fitness or unfitness. It is, then, a glaring misuse of this Divine gift by which we are so eminently distinguished from every other terrestrial being, when, through prejudice, we hastily reject the doctrines of the Gospel, or adopt a contrary belief, without examination. Many, it is to be feared, will awfully aggravate their final condemnation, by the manner in which they have misapplied their reason, to the dishonour of themselves, and the great detriment of the community.

Let us pray for grace to exercise our understanding and judgment with discretion, in order that we may avoid those fatal mistakes, into which the perversion of them will certainly lead us.

10. Our natural endowments and acquired abilities should be duly esteemed and improved. With these, God may be glorified, and society be materially benefitted. By our wisdom, experience, advice, exertions, and influence, we may assist in supplying the wants of the needy, succouring the distressed, and rescuing the weak and defenceless and oppressed, from the hands of the violent and wicked man. God

has "put these treasures into some earthen vessels," for the general advantage of society. Woe, then, to that slothful servant, who either neglects the cultivation of his talents, or hides them uselessly in the earth! He will be covered with shame, when the Lord, who confided them to his management, shall accost him, saying, 'Wherefore hast thou wasted and despised the precious gifts with which thou hast been entrusted?'

Nor will any advantages of an external kind, relating more particularly to our bodily welfare, be overlooked in the day of God.

11. Our health is a talent, for which we are deeply accountable, because it gives us ability for the employment of all the rest. To secure the benefits which it is capable of affording, we should carefully avoid all approaches towards luxury and intemperance, which have a strong tendency to enervate the mind, as well as to ruin the body.

12. The uses to which our property and estates have been applied, will be examined into hereafter. We are but stewards, under God, in the management of our worldly possessions; from whom he will require an impartial and minute account. At the time appointed, he will say to each of us, "Give an account of thy stewardship^a."

With what feelings will the covetous, who have steeled their hearts against the calls of humanity, approach their offended God? With what sensations of regret will the prodigal spendthrift, and the gay voluptuary, look at last on their conduct, when they come to reflect, that the wealth which might have been directed to alleviate the distresses of the poor, whom they have left to perish, has been lavished

^a Luke xvi. 2.

away in luxury and extravagance, and in support of carnal pomp and festivity? The remembrance of mercies abused to such purposes, will occasion a torment of conscience, of which they have no conception.

Let none of those to whom the Lord has confided property, squander it away, in needless dress and ornaments; or in the gratification of improper desires, and keeping up mere appearances: rather let your superfluous wealth be used for instructing the ignorant, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked. By such acts of liberality, "we shall make the blessing of him that was ready to perish to come upon us, and cause the widow's heart to sing for joy°."

13. There is no talent, for the misuse of which we shall incur so heavy a responsibility, as time; which multitudes waste in vanity or idleness. Time was bestowed upon us, that, by a life devoted to God, we "might make our calling and election sure;" and thus be prepared for a joyful immortality.

What, then, are they doing, who adopt every expedient which a depraved imagination can suggest, to rob themselves of those invaluable moments which should be employed "in working out their salvation with fear and trembling?" How many ingenious triflers will be speechless at the bar of Christ, when they see the misery into which their mis-spending of time has plunged them! How many will awake from their dreams of vain-glory, each one wishing that he had been an irrational brute or insect, that he might never have been responsible for talents and privileges neglected or abused! Stung with remorse at the disappointment of their hopes, they will be

° Job xxix. 13.

ready to say, in language used on another occasion, "The battle is fought, but the victory is lost for ever and ever."

Let us profit by the indiscretion of others, as well as learn wisdom from our own past miscarriages. Though we have never yet been duly impressed with the importance of time, yet, even now, let us redeem it, for the purpose for which it was given. It is not too late to enter on a religious course; which, through grace, will fortify us against the fear of death, and open to us, through the Divine mercy, the gates of everlasting life.

LECTURE XXXII.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

John v. 28, 29.—*Marvel not at this : for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

INFIDELS, who have attempted to discredit every other doctrine of the Christian Religion, have not suffered that of the Resurrection from the dead to escape their furious attacks. They deny this leading article of our most holy faith, from a wish to be exempted from those consequences which its admission involves; namely, a judgment to come; and a visitation of their wicked conduct with a punishment commensurate to its deserts, the very thought of which is sufficient to mar their guilty pleasures: and hence, in order that they may live as they please, and indulge their insatiate thirst after the vanities of life, they find it expedient to divest themselves of a belief in the Resurrection, which solemnly teaches their responsibility to God.—Vain and wicked at-

tempt! Well might the poet bestow on such egregious folly the severity of his censure:—

“ Yet man, fool man ! here buries all his thoughts ;
Inters celestial hopes, without one sigh.
Prisoner of earth, and pent beneath the moon,
Here pinions all his wishes ; wing'd by Heav'n
To fly at infinite ; and reach it there,
Where seraphs gather immortality,
On life's fair tree, fast by the throne of God^a.”

Notwithstanding every endeavour to stifle the voice of conscience, it secretly whispers, in the ears of the unbeliever, ‘ Thou must one day rise from the grave, to answer for thy deeds.’

The arguments by which impious men try to persuade themselves into a disbelief of the Resurrection, however plausible in appearance, are really fallacious ; not only because they contradict the express testimony of God, but have no real solidity, when weighed in the balances of impartial reason. Their objections may be reduced to two heads.

1. The first cavil which asserts the impossibility of it, is a reproach to the understandings of those who raise it. It is contended by atheists, that a general Resurrection is absolutely impracticable, on account of the various ways in which human bodies are destroyed ; some of which are reduced to ashes by fire ; others are drowned and devoured by fishes ; and the generality of them moulder into dust, and afterwards contribute to the nourishment of animals. But these, or any other changes which the bodies of men may undergo, do not oppose any insurmountable difficulties in the way of an Omnipotent God ; for surely He, who first created man out of the dust of the ground by his mere fiat, can restore their bodies

^a *Young's Night Thoughts* : Night i. 135—142.

in a moment, however they may have been destroyed, or into however so many parts they have been divided, or however remotely they may have been scattered. He perfectly knows of how many parts each individual body is composed; and is able to collect and re-unite them “in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump^a,” so as to make them identically the same bodies as they were before their dissolution^b. And that he will do so, he has given us the most positive assurance:—“Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation^{bb}.” To say, then, that this grand event is impossible, is not only to tax God with direct falsehood, but to deny his omnipotence, and “to limit the Holy One of Israel;” offences so heinous, that a man should tremble to commit them.

2. The second objection is urged against the probability of our being raised from the dead. They who boldly venture to pronounce a Resurrection improbable, take different ground from the first class of objectors: they do not presume to question the ability of God to effect it, but only conceive that his power never will be exerted for such a purpose. Their opinion is grounded on a vain imagination, that the Deity is so entirely occupied about the management of his heavenly kingdom, as to have neither leisure nor inclination to take the least notice of the affairs of this world;—in fact, that he looks with an equal eye of indifference upon the virtues or vices of finite creatures; that he will not make

^a 1 Cor. xv. 52.

^b Grotius's Truth of the Christian Religion. ^{bb} John v. 28, 29.

the one the subject of his praise, nor the other of punishment hereafter; and, consequently, that men will not rise from the grave.

Such hypotheses are as weak as they are impious. They are designedly constructed to exclude God from the government of his own world; and they betray a total ignorance of his justice, which renders a resurrection necessary, in order that, by an investigation into every man's actions, he may confer suitable rewards on the godly, and pursue the wicked with the vengeance due to their crimes. And, moreover, they equally tend to inspire men with unbecoming pride, by misrepresenting their condition, as if they were altogether independent of God; whereas we cannot, without doing the utmost violence to our consciences, believe that he will take no more notice of us than of the brutes which perish.

The word of the Lord decidedly confutes such atheistical and blasphemous fancies, by inculcating the solemn truth of our resurrection; and by affirming, what reason cannot disallow, "that God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil^c."

3. The same passages which have been adduced to prove that the Church under the Old Testament had distinct notions of the immortality of the soul, will be equally forcible, to shew that they were not left in the dark with regard to the Resurrection; since the one almost seems to pre-suppose and include the other. It will not, therefore, be improper to add to the texts already cited in the foregoing Lecture, a few others, which will still more strikingly elucidate the faith of the Patriarchs, of Moses, and the Prophets, in these momentous doctrines.

^c Eccles. xii. 14.

On the above principle, we can see the importance of Jacob's declaration: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord^d." But what other salvation could this good man expect, in the immediate prospect of death, but the raising up again of his body from the grave, to partake with his soul of that redemption of Christ which ensures to his believing people their eternal glorification in the world to come?

Job, in a passage which has been quoted before^{dd}, and in another, where he is speaking of the natural death of the body, professes an entire confidence in its restoration at a future period. "So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come^e."

4. The Psalmist expressed his unshaken belief in the resurrection of the dead, when he expected that a complete separation would take place between the enemies and the friends of God. "Arise, O Lord! disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword; from men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness^f." "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; my flesh also shall rest in hope: for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption^g."

5. Isaiah teaches the same doctrine, in a portion of

^d Gen. xlix. 18.

^{dd} Job xix. 25—28.

^e ib. xiv. 12, 14.

^f Psalm xvii. 13—15.

^g ib. xvi. 9—11.

Scripture, where Christ may be supposed to address his persecuted Church, which is his mystical body:—

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead^b.”

6. Passing over the prophecy of Ezekiel^h—which, whilst it primarily refers to the deliverance of Judah from the Babylonish captivity, contains a direct allusion to the Resurrection,—I shall just advert to the strong language of Daniel, who was honoured with rich discoveries concerning “the things that must be hereafter.” “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contemptⁱ.”

7. The prophet Hosea introduces our Saviour contemplating the triumphant effects of his victory over the hosts of darkness, and the benefits which would result therefrom to his saved people:—“I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death! I will be thy plagues: O grave! I will be thy destructionⁱⁱ.”

Thus we see that believers in the ancient Church of God were acquainted with the doctrine of a Resurrection, and of a future state of retribution; in which they were taught to expect punishment or reward, according to their deserts.

8. If we descend to the time of Christ and his Apostles, we shall find that the Resurrection made a distinguished feature of their public instructions. The doctrine was urged on their hearers, as a most powerful incentive to a holy life. And what consi-

^b Isa. xxvi. 19.

^h Ezek. xxxvii. 1—14.

ⁱ Dan. xii. 2.

ⁱⁱ Hos. xiii. 14.

deration can be more availing to incline us to cultivate religious affections, than the certainty of a future state, where our conduct will be freely scrutinized?

9. Our Lord told the unbelieving Jews, "This is the Father's will, which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day¹." He comforted Martha, who was disconsolate for the death of Lazarus her brother, by saying, "I am the resurrection and the life¹." Indeed, so frequently did he enforce his discourses by a reference to this doctrine, that it is quite superfluous to bring together that great multitude of passages in which it is expressly mentioned.

10. The Apostles of Jesus adopted the same method. They constantly appealed to it as a capital article of the Christian faith, which distinguished it from every human system. The resolution and frequency with which St. Paul insisted on this cardinal point was so great, that he incurred the groundless accusation of being "a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them Jesus, and the Resurrection^m." Yes, and wherever he went, he boldly avowed the doctrine, in the face of his bitterest enemies; saying, "I have hope towards God, which they also themselves allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjustⁿ." And they were always willing to make any sacrifices however dear, to face any dangers though ever so great, and to submit to death in its most horrid forms, in defence of the doctrine. So great was the zeal, and unshaken the constancy, of the Apostles in propagating this truth, that all of

¹ John vi. 39.

¹ ib. xi. 25, 26.

^m Acts xvii. 18.

ⁿ Acts xxiv. 15.

them, except one, shed their blood in attestation of it; which they could never have been persuaded to do, had they not felt certain of the reality and importance of what they affirmed concerning it.

11. St. Paul was inspired to give the Church the fullest information on the subject. He mentions the order and manner in which the grand event will be brought about. The righteous, "who have fallen asleep in Christ," will first awake, to join their brethren who are alive at the second advent of Jesus. Thus congregated, the faithful in Christ shall rise to inherit eternal blessedness. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

12. After the Elect are thus gathered together, and have ascended to heaven, then the immense number of wicked men, who have lived in successive ages from the creation to the end of the world, will, in a collected body, rise from the dead, to receive their appointed doom. After the righteous have been previously justified before God and his holy angels, the wicked will take their station at the judgment-seat of Christ; when, having been condemned as transgressors of the Divine law, they will "go away into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

13. A Divine Almighty agency will be employed to usher in the solemn and imposing scene. The Resurrection will be effected by Christ's resistless power, which will be displayed on this awful occasion, in the most glorious, though terrific manner. "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth¹." Yes, the same voice which called all things into existence, is to be once more exerted, for the purpose of awaking the dead from the slumbers of the tomb. At its dread and majestic sound, our scattered ashes will be collected, our bones will be covered with flesh, and our bodies, identically the same, will, "in a moment," burst their earthly prisons, to appear before Christ in judgment.

14. Pause, for a while, O my soul ! and meditate on the grand transactions of the Resurrection morning. What countless millions of human beings, who have slept for ages, dost thou behold coming forth from the dreary mansions of death, and rising, on a sudden, into a new and unceasing existence ! See them, on the summons being given, ascending through the skies ! How important the destiny which awaits them !—everlasting punishment, or endless joy and bliss !

How transcendently glorious is the Judge and Saviour, whose word is attended with such amazing effects ! "From his face the earth and the heaven flee away ; and there is found no place for them²." But, oh ! what energy must that sound possess, which gives life to the dead, and which nothing can resist ! for even the most rebellious must then hear and obey.

To the faithful people of God, it will be a joyful sound, inviting them to participate of those felicities for which they will then be completely fitted. Christ's appearance will be an auspicious day for

¹ John v. 28, 29.

² Rev. xx. 11.

them ; because they shall “ lift up their heads, and behold their final redemption drawing nigh.”

But the enemies and despisers of Christ will hear his voice, and contemplate the Resurrection with far different feelings. Will they listen to the shout of the Lord, and the dread summons of the archangel, with emotions of delight ? No ; having rejected the word of his salvation in the Gospel, his voice will then thrill their guilty souls with horrid forebodings of their approaching sorrow.

There are some other circumstances, which will attend the scene, that deserve consideration : and these are, the changes which the Resurrection will produce on the bodies of good and bad men.

15. The righteous will undergo a material improvement, with regard to the qualities of their bodies. They will then “ put off their earthly tabernacles, so liable to injury and decay ; and be clothed upon with their house which is from heaven.” Their bodies will be made spiritual ; fit companions for their immortal souls : and both will be adapted to the service of God, and qualified to share the bliss of Paradise.

How sublime, how animating is the language of the Apostle on this subject ! “ It is sown in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonour ; it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body ; it is raised a spiritual body.” “ Our conversation is in heaven : from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things to himself.” How cheering the thought, Believer, that, ere long, you will

¹ 2 Cor. v. 1, 2. ² 1 Cor. xv. 42—45. ³ Phil. iii. 21.

have the happiness "of being like unto Christ, whom you shall see as he is," without any thing to obstruct the delightful vision". Then will your soul be filled with the sweetest peace, in contemplating his dying love, and enjoying the manifestations of his favour evermore.

16. But little is said in Scripture respecting the appearance of the ungodly at that tremendous day. We are led, however, from the declarations of the Divine word, to expect, that although their bodies will assume precisely the same shape as before, yet, at the Resurrection, they will be so tempered by the power of God as to be capable of enduring for ever those torments which his justice has prepared for them: "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt". Now, as their bodies have been implicated with their souls in rebellion against heaven, it is but just that they should also partake of such interminable sufferings.

17. After what has been said, does any one still think it an "incredible thing that God should raise the dead?" If he will but receive the testimony of eternal truth, it will assure him, that God has already given striking specimens of his power to accomplish the general Resurrection, by raising not only his blessed Son^{xx}, but also Lazarus^y, and several of his saints, in honour of their Lord and Saviour^{zz}.

St. Paul affirms, in consequence of the event—what it is of the utmost consequence to us to know—that our Lord's resurrection is a certain pledge of our own, at the time appointed. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them

ⁱ John iii. 2. ^x Mark ix. 49. ^{xx} Rom. i. 4. Acts ii. 31—35.
^y John xi. 33—45. ^{zz} Mat. xxvii. 52, 53

that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first-fruits; afterward, they that are Christ's, at his coming*." *1 Cor. xv. 20—24.*

18. Reason, in her loftiest exercise, could never have fully discovered the certainty of a resurrection from the dead. Had it not been for Revelation, it must for ever have remained unknown. Yet, when proclaimed in Scripture, Reason can offer no objection to the voice of Inspiration, but, as the handmaid of Religion, concurs in bearing witness to the truth.

Observations on the changes which are frequently taking place in the natural world, lead us, by analogy, to infer, that the Resurrection is both possible and probable.

19. The variations in the Seasons, the vicissitudes of Summer and Winter, Spring and Autumn, Day and Night, produce effects which amount to a kind of Resurrection. Summer is succeeded by Winter; during which, vegetation dies or disappears; trees lose their leaves for want of sap to nourish them; the earth is covered with snow, or crusted over with frost, and becomes a general sepulchre in which seeds lie buried. But when the Spring advances, all begin to rise from their dormitories; plants and flowers peep out of their graves, and gradually acquire all the perfection of which they are capable. Here is an annual Resurrection!

20. An attentive consideration of the revolutions brought about every twenty-four hours, will bring us to a similar conclusion. The Day is succeeded by Night, which draws her sable curtain over all the creation,

and shrouds it in silent gloom and darkness: but the morning sun brings back the Day, which, opening the grave of darkness, rises again, and presents surrounding objects once more to our notice.—What is this, but a sort of diurnal Resurrection?

21. The alternate changes of rest and labour, so necessary for the comfort and health of our bodies, do not unaptly represent that state which is the subject of the present discussion. Our bodies during the hours of repose seem, in some respects, almost dead: their senses are locked up: their powers are inactive and dormant: but when the morning light begins to dawn, our eyes are opened; and refreshed by sleep, we arise from this temporary death, and resume our customary pursuits with fresh alacrity.—Here, then, is a species of Resurrection, of which we ourselves are the constant subjects!

22. Again: some animals are annually changing their shape and bulk. The caterpillar, whilst undergoing transformation into a chrysalis, appears dead for a time, until, warmed by the influence of the sun, it breaks its shell or tomb; and then it suddenly starts into life, assuming all the gaiety and brilliance of the butterfly.

Several animals, deprived by the severity of Winter of much of their natural vivacity, shut themselves up, and lie torpid, in subterraneous caves and dens, for several months, until the genial heat of Spring and Summer reanimates, and draws them forth from their slumbering retreats; and then, as it were, they rise to a new and more vigorous life.

23. Further: the corn, which nourishes our bodies, is cast into the ground; where it perishes, as to its shape and substance, except the germ; but, after it has lain dormant for a season, it revives, and multiplies exceedingly. On this account, our Lord

illustrates the Resurrection by a reference to the dying and reviving state of grain :—" Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit^a."

Hence it appears, that our bodies are fed, and our existence is supported, by a continual succession of resurrections. Hence natural " things are repaired by corrupting, preserved by perishing, and revive by dying: and can we think that man, the lord of these inferior things which thus die and rise again for his benefit, should be so detained by death, as never to live again? Is it imaginable that God should thus restore all things to man, and not restore man to himself?"

If, indeed, no other reasons could be assigned, but our imperfect condition in this life; our free agency, which makes us the proper subjects of punishment or rewards; and the changes through which other creatures are statedly passing; they would be sufficient to render the resurrection of our bodies an event highly probable^b.

24. It is vain and presumptuous, then, for wicked men to flatter themselves with impunity in the commission of sin; since " God has revealed his determination to raise the dead; and has confirmed it by the resurrection of several persons, and of Christ, as the highest example which can be given unto man, that the all-important doctrine might be established beyond all possibility of contradiction."

Let sinners bear in remembrance, that however their bodies may be dissolved and separated into particles of dust, God will re-unite and recompose them, in order that they may stand before him at the day of general retribution. Wherefore he " con-

^a John xii. 24.

^b Pearson on the Creed.

mandeth all men everywhere to repent ; because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that God-man, Jesus Christ, whom he hath ordained ; whereof he hath given assurance to all men in that he hath raised him from the dead^e." Let them beware how they throw away " the present accepted time, and the day of salvation ;" lest their impenitence and provocations should exhaust his patience, and force him to " swear, in his wrath, that they shall not enter into his rest." Rather let them " seek God while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near^d;" for whosoever abaseth himself before the Lord, by a sincere repentance, shall find " there is forgiveness with him, and plenteous redemption^h."

25. Men, in general, are deeply interested in this stupendous transaction. Every man ought to act under a conviction of the certainty of a Resurrection; in which he must bear an important part. And this high consideration should forcibly deter all men from transgression ; and persuade them to the practice of universal righteousness, as the only preparation for heaven ; in comparison of which, this life, with all its advantages, is but as an unsubstantial shadow^f.

How, then, can any one deliberately continue in sin, whilst he is impressed with the thought, that he must rise from the dead, and suffer the torments which it merits ? What secular pleasure or gain should entice us, what momentary enjoyment should induce us, to risk the dreadful loss of a blessed immortality ?

If we dare to pollute our souls and bodies by an iniquitous course of life, how can we expect that they *will* be raised to glory and honour hereafter ? As

^e Acts xvii. 30, 31.

^h Psalm cxxx. 4—7.

^d Isa. lv. 6.

^f James iv. 14.

we die, so shall we rise. If we have lived righteously and godly on earth, we shall obtain a happy resurrection; but, if we have dishonoured God by levity and profaneness and irreligion, we "shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt"; and then we shall acknowledge the justice of our doom.

Bear in remembrance, each revolving day, the grand event of which we have been discoursing. It will stimulate you to pray for grace, "that you may cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light." By thus serving Christ acceptably in the Gospel, you may be prepared to welcome him, when he cometh to "judge the world in righteousness."

26. The Resurrection, and the bliss which it will disclose, is calculated to administer the richest consolation to devout Christians. Faith in Christ, who is the source of life and salvation, will arm your souls against the fear of death. Since God assures you of the possession of eternal life after your bodies are dissolved, you may safely dismiss all your doubts, and descend quietly and confidently into the grave, in hope of a glorious resurrection.

Death is indeed the gate which leads to immortal life; through which you must pass, before you can reach the kingdom of God; where you shall obtain "everlasting joy, and sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away."

* Dan. xii. 2.

LECTURE XXXIII.

ON THE JUDGMENT.

2 Cor. v. 10. *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

WE have seen, from the foregoing chapter, that the Resurrection is a doctrine authoritatively taught by the Oracles of Heaven;—that it appears highly probable in itself; and is supported by changes annually and daily taking place in the ordinary course of nature, which materially illustrate and confirm it.

Let the Resurrection be once credited, and there can be no good reason for withholding our belief in a day of retribution; which seems to follow it by a necessary consequence.

But we are not left to conjecture or speculation in so weighty a matter; since the word of the Lord affirmatively declares, that he intends, at a future period, to judge his accountable creatures. We shall therefore do well to advert to its testimony, and, at the same time, to weigh the force of those arguments which reason supplies, in vindication of the doctrine.

1. That there will be a day of judgment hereafter, is manifest from the solemn notices which the inspired writers give us respecting that event. “The Lord shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment, and he shall judge the world in righteousness: he shall minister judgment to the people, in uprightness.” Solomon announces the fact in *decisive* terms: “God shall bring every work into

• Psalm ix. 7, 8.

judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil^b.”

That tremendous day of the Lord is thus majestically represented by Christ himself, who is constituted Judge of quick and dead:—“When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right-hand, but the goats on his left^c.”

St. Paul confirms this declaration, by the following statement: “God commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised Him from the dead^d.” This truth, then, is as certain as the indubitable testimony of God can make it.

2. The universality of the future judgment is repeatedly insisted on, with a view to induce all men to hold themselves in readiness for an event in which they have an equal concern.

At this great assize, none of the human race will be wanting. Every one must be present, to take his trial, and to receive his final doom. Before the tribunal of Christ will be collected, in a promiscuous throng, kings and their subjects, the wise and ignorant, the honourable and mean, the rich and poor, the good and bad, the aged and young, the hoary sire and the infant of days; in a word, men of all nations under heaven. “For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the

^b Eccl. xii. 14. ^c Mat. xxv. 31—34. ^d Acts xvii. 30, 31.

things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*."

The untimely deaths of those persons who have been drowned in the mighty ocean, or of those whose bodies have been destroyed by fire or other accidents, will not prevent their assembling with the rest of mankind on this august occasion. St. John beheld in vision the whole human race congregated at the bar of Christ :—" And I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it ; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them ; and they were judged, every man, according to their works†."

Let no one, then, persuade himself that his general conduct and actions will be passed over in silence, on the day of reckoning ; or that he shall escape the observation of the Judge, " to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid"."

To avoid making our appearance before him, will be as impracticable as it will be to reverse the sentence which he pronounces, or to obstruct its execution ; for being possessed of " all power in heaven and earth," it will be impossible to withstand his sovereign determination.

3. The reasonableness and necessity of a future judgment may be inferred from the imperfection of the present state. In this life, it is not always possible to detect and punish crimes. For want of evidence to

* 2 Cor. v. 10.

† Rev. xx. 12, 13.

‡ Collect for Communion Service.

convict them, flagrant offenders often lie concealed, and escape condign vengeance.

There are sins, too, which are highly injurious to society, and affronting to God, for which human laws provide no punishment; and others, which they do not visit so heavily as their enormity deserves. A general scrutiny, therefore, into the deeds of mankind is absolutely necessary; that offences, which have been secretly committed, and which have lain hid for ages, may be brought to light, and that no evil actions may pass unnoticed. Now, it is the principal design of the judgment-day, “to bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and to make manifest the counsels of the hearts^s.”

The justice of God requires such an examination, in order that he may reward those who have acted in obedience to his commands, and punish the unbelieving, the impenitent, and the rebellious, which he will certainly do, in the world to come; unless, as it is absurd to suppose, he should tamely renounce his authority over his creatures, and suffer any insults offered to his moral government to pass by with impunity. We can never think so meanly of Him, who solemnly avers, “Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished^b.”

Besides, in this life, virtue and vice, good and evil, are too often confounded with each other. Wickedness is too generally palliated and caressed; and true piety is laughed out of countenance, and despised by a thoughtless world, insomuch that every one who “departeth from evil maketh himself a preyⁱ.”

The judgment will rectify these errors, and exhibit things in their true colours. Then darkness will not, as it is too often now, be put for light, nor false-

^s 1 Cor. iv. 5.

^b Prov. xi. 21.

ⁱ Isa. lix. 15.

hood for truth, nor vice for virtue; but a perfect distinction will be for ever established betwixt the extremes of righteousness and wickedness; and, whilst the former will be applauded, the latter will be marked with infamy, and held in everlasting disgrace^k.

4. Again; the striking inequalities discoverable in the condition of saints and sinners in this life lead the mind forward to a better state, in which a discrimination will be made in favour of those who, under all the sorrows and temptations of their earthly pilgrimage, have "cleaved unto God with full purpose of heart." Here we not uncommonly see the enemies of the Lord "flourishing like a green bay-tree," abounding with riches, signalized by honours and dignities, and possessed of almost every enjoyment which their carnal hearts can desire: swollen with pride, they not only tread the righteous under their unhallowed feet, but venture to defy even God himself^l.

Besides the persecutions to which the piety of a good man necessarily exposes him, his lot is often greatly embittered with poverty, and rendered grievous by inward conflicts and sufferings, arising from the Christian warfare which he has to maintain, but to which the rest of the world are total strangers. David, "the man after God's own heart," was so much perplexed and discouraged^m, by a view of the marked disparity which he saw betwixt the state of good and bad men in this life, that he was ready, on one occasion, to arraign the equity of Jehovah's dealings, and to renounce his faith and hope, as if they were misplaced, or likely to be disappointed for

^k Mal. iii. 17, 18.

^l Job xxi. 14, 15. Ps. xciv. 7—11.

^m Ps. lxxiii. 1—23.

ever. But, when he learnt, in the sanctuary, the destruction which would overtake the wicked, and the misery which was to succeed their prosperity in a future state, he acquiesced in the choice which he had made, and coveted the favour of God, as the best, the most satisfying possession:—"Whom have I in heaven but Thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for everⁿ."

A judgment to come, therefore, appears indispensably needful; when impiety shall receive its ill deserts, and the faith and patience of the saints meet with a distinguished reward; and when those apparently crooked dispensations of Providence, which have severely exercised our souls, shall be made straight, and appear to have been founded in wisdom and equity. To this day of recompence, "this time for the restitution of all things," the upright mind naturally casts its eye, for the redress of those numerous evils which it may be forced to suffer from the depravity and pride of an ungodly world.

5. The ordination, character, and qualifications of the Judge next claim our most serious attention. It is doubtless a matter of infinite importance, that He, to whom the arduous task of judging mankind is to be referred, should possess every qualification for such an office; in order that, by the strict integrity of his decisions, all the ends of justice may be secured, in rendering to each one according to his deeds.

He, whom God has ordained to be our Judge, is Jesus Christ our Lord, into whose hands he has entrusted the management of the awful and import-

ⁿ Psalm lxxiii. 25—28.

ant business of the future judgment. His appointment is thus spoken of:—"The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son. For, as the Father hath life in himself, even so hath he given the Son to have life in himself: and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man^o." Who then can venture, without incurring the guilt of blasphemy, to disapprove of his ordination? or who can dispute his ability and fitness to sustain the exalted office?

Is it necessary that the universal Judge should be perfectly holy, just, and good? The character of our Lord accords with the requisition. During his intercourse with sinful mortals on earth, he uniformly evinced, amidst the severest temptations and the keenest reproach and persecution, the most immaculate holiness, in all his words and actions. So conscious was he of the rectitude of his whole conduct, that he could safely appeal to his enemies for his justification: "Which of you convinceth me of sin^p?" He was indeed (what belongs to Divinity alone) "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens^{pp}." Being God, in whom unblemished sanctity resides, he can do nothing to violate the eternal rules of justice, by which he invariably acts.

Is it expedient that He who sits in the seat of judgment should be omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent?—Our Jehovah Jesus is possessed of these attributes, in all their perfection. Hence we may expect, from such an assemblage of excellent qualifications, that this great scrutiny into men's behaviour will be conducted with the utmost impar-

^o John v. 22—27.

^p ib. viii. 46.

^{pp} Heb. vii. 26.

ality, equity, and truth ; so that none will have reason to complain, either that his cause has been imperfectly understood and unfairly tried, or unjustly decided.

The perfect knowledge of every man's actions, which Christ possesses, will enable him, without the aid of witnesses, to acquit the innocent, or to convict the guilty. No one will then be able to conceal his transgression, or to prevent a full disclosure of every circumstance relating to himself. And what his justice determines, his omnipotence will easily effect. Thus the unsullied righteousness of the Great Judge will ensure the fairest decision, from which no appeal can be admitted, and no reversal obtained.

How powerfully do these reflections suggest the wisdom of making Christ propitious to us now, by a life devoted to his glory ; that, at his second coming, we may be found acceptable in his sight, and receive those honourable tokens of regard which he will plentifully bestow on his true adherents !

6. Let us now describe the proceedings of that day, and the events which will precede and follow it. The precise period, fixed in the inscrutable purposes of God, for its commencement, is wisely hid from us^a ; yet we are led to suppose that it will take place immediately after the Resurrection. Then it will be said, "Behold ! he cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him : and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him^r."

The inconceivable Majesty which Christ will display, in his descent from heaven, attended by his angels, will be fearfully appalling to the wicked. Terrified with the prospect of their approaching sufferings, they will behold the sight with the deepest

^a Mat. xxiv. 36.

^r Rev. i. 7.

anguish, and the most heart-rending lamentations. At the view of his crucifixion, heaven and earth were sensibly affected; but when he shall come to judgment, universal nature will be moved and dissolved at his presence. But who can fully conceive the terrific splendour of such a scene? The graves suddenly opening, will freely give up their prisoners. Those bodies which were crumbled into dust will be re-animated, and rise from the tomb with renewed vigour, at the sound of Christ's resistless voice. The rocks, being rent in pieces, will fly about in every direction. The earth will be convulsed to its centre; and all its furniture being wrapped in flames, will be destroyed by a general conflagration. To increase the terror and the glory of this exhibition, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Meanwhile, the trump of God will reiterate the dread command, with sounds so loud, that all will be forced to hear it:—"Come to judgment! come to judgment!" And thus summoned, all will ascend to the skies, to stand before the tribunal of Christ. The righteous will contemplate this day with wonder and delight. It will be to them the consummation of all their hopes of never-ending bliss; the dawn of a heavenly day, whose Sun shall never set.

7. And Christ being then seated on his glorious throne, legions of the angelic host will be prepared to execute his mandates; and every human creature, from the highest even to the lowest, being cited before him, he will proceed to examine their conduct. And then that inquiry will begin, which is to decide for ever the fate of all mankind, when

"they that have done good shall go into everlasting life, but they that have done evil into everlasting fire."

The "Book of God's remembrance," in which our actions are impartially recorded, will now be produced, to furnish evidence for our acquittal or condemnation : and the testimony which it will bear to our conduct, will be confirmed by the voice of conscience, which will fully acquiesce in the justice of the sentence^u.

8. The righteous will first be called into his presence, to hear the sentence of approbation to be pronounced on them. The judgment will commence with a public avowal of their acceptance and justification. When "the books are opened," it will be seen that many, who had been previously chargeable with heinous sins, have truly repented, and amended the evil of their doings : believing in Christ with a lively faith, they were then justified in the court of conscience, clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and obtained peace with God, as a proof of the forgiveness of their iniquities, and of their title to eternal glory. They have proved the sincerity of their repentance, by the piety and holiness of their deportment. The new heart formed within them by the Spirit of God, has produced a total reformation of character, evidenced by their subsequent conduct.

And, then, the sufferings which they have endured for the sake of their Divine Master, their submission to his will, their gratitude to God for his mercy, and their self-abasement, will be made manifest to all.

Then, also, their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ," their righteousness, obedience, spiritual walk and

^u *Mal. iii. 16.*

^v *Rev. xx. 12.*

^w *1 Thess. i. 3.*

conversation, will be fully acknowledged: and, then, their zeal for the extension of the glory of God, and their ardent desires for the salvation of men, will draw forth the commendations of the Saviour, who will not suffer the smallest token of affection to him, or the weakest effort sincerely made to advance his cause, to pass unrewarded.

Now, too, all the calumnies and lies which have been raised against the people of God will be satisfactorily confuted; for he has promised "that the rebuke of his people shall be taken away from the earth*."

Their enemies will no longer brand them with illiberal epithets; but justify their conduct, as the dictate of the soundest wisdom; whilst they will feel constrained to condemn their own folly in neglecting that piety of heart which has led to the exaltation of the righteous. "We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: how is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints?"

And, then, their justification having been announced to the assembled world, Christ, with accents of inexpressible grace and love, will thus address them: "Come, ye (blessed) children of my Father! inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*." The equity of this sentence will be admitted by all; whilst they, in whose favour it is pronounced, will have cause for joy and exultation; accounting their past sufferings light and momentary, in comparison with the "eternal weight of glory" which shall be revealed in them*.

9. The wicked, consisting of the rest of mankind,

* Isa. xxv. 8.

* Wisdom of Solomon, v. 4, 5.

* Mat. xxv. 34.

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

will then be placed before the judgment-seat of Christ. Conscious of their guilt, they will not be able to endure the countenance of the incensed Judge without trepidation and alarm: they will approach his bar with slow and trembling and reluctant steps.

And when the books are opened, in which their evil deeds are registered, what scenes of villany will be developed! Crimes of the deepest cast, which have lain hid for ages, will then be divulged before all. The wicked actions of the unrighteous, the oppressor, the unjust, the murderer, the persecutor, and of all who have walked contrary to the Gospel, will be set in the light of their countenances. And, oh! how will sinners be covered with shame, to find those deeds of infamy, which they hoped to bury in eternal silence, proclaimed before the assembled world!

There will be no necessity of calling witnesses, to substantiate the charges which are preferred against them: the violated law, and the upbraidings of conscience, will be their accusers.

And now they will be convicted, by the clearest evidence, of countless offences against God, whose commands they have wilfully disobeyed—of unbelief and contempt of Christ, whose salvation they have despised—of despite to the Spirit of his Grace, by whom they might have been sanctified^b—of manifold acts of injustice to his brethren—in fine, of incredible mischief to the souls of men, by their own pernicious example.

Being self-condemned, and having nothing to offer in their defence, or in arrest of judgment, Christ will pass on them the irrevocable sentence, "Depart

^b Heb. x. 29.

from me, ye cursed ! into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels^c." Tremendous words ! every one of which will be big with horror to the impenitent sinner. How awful the punishment ! How eternally miserable the condition of lost souls ! They will be deprived of the cheering presence of God, and the ineffable bliss of heaven ; and be consigned to darkness and suffering and despair, without any intermission throughout eternity ; and this will constitute the greatest sorrow imaginable.

Seeing their doom is inevitable, what will they then be willing to give, to obtain its reversal ?—Foolish thought !—The Judge is inexorable, and will take no bribe. His aversion to sin, his inflexible regard to justice and righteousness, will oblige him to consign impenitent transgressors to perdition.

In what light will they then regard their past unholy conduct ? Will it then be, as it was in the day of their worldly prosperity—a cause of joy and pleasure ? Will they then look back with any satisfaction on those deeds of wickedness which they have wantonly committed ? No : the recollection will fill them with shame and unavailing regret. They will condemn themselves, on a review of their misspent life, for having incensed God, and neglected those valuable opportunities, which he afforded them, of gaining the crown of immortal glory, which they will then lose for ever and ever.

All their sorrow will be too late, to be of any avail. The die will then be cast, and their destiny unalterably fixed.

The fatal hour is now come : and the angels must execute their awful commission. They will cast, herefore, the drunkard, the whoremonger, the

^c Mat. xxv. 41.

adulterer, the sensualist, the thief, the swearer, the infidel, the unbeliever, the covetous, the worldly-minded, and all who have forsaken or neglected or dishonoured God, into the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone^d, where the smoke of their torment will ascend up before God for ever and ever^e.

Neither the hypocrite, who has put on the garb of religion from sinister motives; nor the formalist and self-righteous, who have contented themselves with the form, without the power of godliness; will escape the same punishment. For it will then be made evident, that immense numbers who professed a belief in the Gospel were living at the same time in habits of secret and open iniquity. Though they had, it may be, convictions of the danger of leading an unrighteous life, yet it will be manifest that they loved the wages of sin, and performed all their works to be seen of men, whilst they were strangers to constant, secret, fervent devotion. Destitute of love to Christ and his followers, they were never interested in the covenant of grace, but remained under the curse of the broken law.

This, indeed, will be the case, not only with the openly profane and immoral who have cloaked their secret abominations under a religious profession, but with all those who have not shewn their regard to Christ by a lively faith in him, evidenced by its appropriate fruits and effects.

It is obvious, then, that, at the solemn period to which our attention has been called, none but real believers, who have overcome the world by faith^f, will be able to abide the heart-searching scrutiny of the Judge. To all others, he will say, "Depart

^d Rev. xx. 10. ^e ib. xiv. 10, 11. ^f 1 John v. 4—6.

from me, ye workers of iniquity! I never knew you^c."

10. We shall do well to meditate continually upon the day of judgment; and frequently to place ourselves, by way of anticipation, at the bar of Christ. This method of bringing it often before our eyes would forcibly tend to deter us from entering on a wicked life. We could not indulge in flagrant immorality, or dissolute courses, if we seriously believed in a future day of reckoning, when sin will meet with its just deserts. Nor will an unprofitable, a gay, or a thoughtless life, afford much satisfaction, in the prospect of such a period: for surely a mere negative goodness, which consists in doing no harm to our neighbour, will not answer the demands of the Divine law. We must, through grace, strive to glorify God, as well as to abstain from doing evil, if we would be ranked with his devoted friends.

But how can they, who waste their time in "making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof^b,"—whilst the interests of their souls are forgotten, or rarely attended to,—escape the terrifying denunciation, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teethⁱ?"

Contemplations on the solemnities of judgment imperatively urge upon all men the indispensable necessity of a due preparation. "Prepare to meet thy God^k!" is the merciful warning, which the voice of truth and wisdom perpetually sounds in our ears.

11. The preparation that will qualify us to stand with acceptance before Christ, consists of unfeigned

^c Mat. vii. 23.

ⁱ Mat. xxv. 30.

^b Rom. xiii. 14.

^k Amos iv. 12.

repentance for all our past sins. If you examine your lives by the Scriptures, it will soon appear that you have provoked God by innumerable trespasses, and defiled your souls by many deeds repugnant to his law.

How can these things be forgiven, unless, by sincere contrition and amendment, you actually turn from evil to good? So necessary is this course to our peace with God, that Christ assures us, that except we repent, we must all likewise perish¹.

12. Again: true faith in the atonement of Christ must be connected with genuine contrition. Faith discovers to us our departure from God, excites shame and remorse on account of it, and puts us upon sincere resolutions and endeavours to reform our errors. Faith shews the soul its wants, and leads it to Christ, that he may supply them. Whilst it exhibits the sufficiency of Christ's grace to save the lost, it constrains them to pray for it, that they may find rest to their souls^m.

13. Holiness of life, spirituality of thought and affection, and a growing conformity to the Divine will, are necessary to prepare us for the day of accounts, as well as for the enjoyment of Paradiseⁿ: these constitute a suitable preparation for death, judgment, and eternity.

If, in this way, we honour Christ, and obey his Gospel, not only will the sting and fear of death be removed, but we shall be inspired with holy confidence before him, at his coming^o. And whilst they who have rejected the mercy of Christ will be put to silence, and they who have leaned on their own merits be disappointed of their hope, the believer in the Son of God, who has walked agreeably to his

¹ Luke xiii. 3.

ⁿ Rev. xxi. 27.

^m Mat. xi. 28—30.

^o 1 John ii. 28.

profession, will have his expectations crowned with unceasing joy.

LECTURE XXXIV.

ON FUTURE PUNISHMENTS.

Matt. xxv. 46.—*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.*

THE doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future state has been opposed and denied.

Some, without a shadow of proof or reason, contend that God, regardless of their virtues or vices, does not notice the actions of men; and, consequently, that he will neither inquire into their conduct, nor make it the subject of praise or blame hereafter. This infidel conceit is directly hostile to sound reason, which inclines us to believe that the Moral Governor of the World can never be indifferent whether we acknowledge or rebel against his rightful authority: nor is it less repugnant to the Divine Records, which affirm, “that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad^a.”

Others object to punishments in the world to come, on the ground of their militating against the mercy of Jehovah. To this it may be answered, That compassion is not the only attribute of God: justice and righteousness are perfections as essential to his nature, as his mercy: He styles himself “a just God and a Saviour^b.” All these attributes, then, must harmonize in his dealings with man; for one of them cannot be exercised or exalted at the expense and sacrifice of another^{bb}, without the most serious consequences; for all the grand ends of the Divine

^a 2 Cor. v. 10.

^b Isai. xlv. 21.

^{bb} Psalm lxxxv. 10.

government would be defeated, if no distinction were hereafter to be made betwixt the righteous and the wicked^c. Thus infidels

“Maim Heaven’s perfection, break its equal beams,
Bid mercy triumph over God himself.
Undeified by their opprobrious praise,
A God all mercy is a God unjust^c.”

1. The justice of God will compel him to pursue obdurate sinners with the most unrelenting vengeance. There are some who dare to assert that it will be unjust to visit sin with eternal torments; because it is a punishment, as they falsely imagine, vastly disproportioned to any offences which a finite being can commit. Such objectors have never dispassionately considered the quantity of evil there is in sin. There is a moral turpitude and enormity in it, of which they are totally ignorant. Can that be so light and venial an evil, which provoked God to destroy the whole world^d? which hurled Satan and his guilty associates from their abodes of bliss? which nailed the Lord of Glory to the cross, and occasioned his bitter death and passion? Is that, which is the procuring cause of all the sorrow and disorder in the universe, to be dismissed as a mere trifle, that calls for no inquiry or castigation? Surely, when the high demerit of sin, as “a transgression of the law of God,” is duly reflected on, it assumes the character of an infinite offence, which is worthy of everlasting indignation.

2. Besides, if the punishment of wickedness be eternal in its duration, it is fully counterbalanced by the great rewards conferred on a steady course of

^c Gen. xviii. 23—26. Exod. xxxiv. 5—8.

^c Young’s Night Thoughts, Night iv. 59.

^d Gen. vi. and vii.

ling grieve to learn, that the things which he has pursued with so much avidity, are worthless, in comparison with "the eternal weight of glory" which he has forfeited, in order to obtain them! On a review of their folly, sinners will exclaim, with a mixture of disappointment and remorse, "We have been grasping at shadows, till the substance is irrecoverably gone! we have fought a great battle, but the victory is lost for ever and ever!"

6. The endurance of the most inconceivable torments will aggravate the misery of the damned. It is true, the sacred penmen speak as if the actual sufferings of the wicked in hell will be occasioned by material fire. We are not, however, to interpret their language, on this subject, in a strictly literal sense. Fire is used in Scripture as an emblem to denote wrath and indignation. When the word is therefore applied to Divine judgments, it is intended to signify the displeasure of God against the unrighteous, which will burn like fire. The Jewish Legislator, speaking of the punishment which Heaven will inflict on the idolater and rebellious man, says, "The Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man^a." "Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies; thy right-hand shall find out those that hate thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven, in the time of thy anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour themⁱ."

These expressions shew the intensity of that wrath which God will pour out, without measure, on his adversaries. And, oh! who can imagine how dreadful it is to endure his perpetual frown! "If he hide his face, who then can behold him, whether it be

^a Deut. xxix. 20.

ⁱ Psalm xxi. 8, 9.

done against a nation, or against a man onlyⁱⁱ? But, to be forced to bear his displeasure, without any intermission, through everlasting ages, must certainly be the consummation of misery. And yet the punishment which God will inflict on the wicked, is precisely of this nature.

7. The sufferings of lost souls will be greatly increased by a review of the Lord's past forbearance and kindness towards them. In the very midst of their wickedness on earth, God gave them many opportunities and a long space for reconciliation. "When he passed by and saw them polluted in their own blood, he said unto them, Live; yea, he said unto them, Live^k." "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die^l?" In order "that his goodness might lead them to repentance," he did not cut them suddenly off, as "cumberers of the ground." His Spirit strove with them; but they resisted his influences. His Son Jesus Christ waited to be gracious, and to bring them back to his Father; but they would not hearken to his solicitations. Thus they abused his patience and long-suffering, till the day of grace was succeeded by the hour of vengeance.

Further; God surrounded them daily with his mercies. He gave them the comforts, the necessities, and the conveniences of life: yet they would not acknowledge the hand which supplied their wants; but converted his blessings into curses, by the improper use which they made of them.

In the abyss of woe, the compassion of God, and the abuse of his goodness, will be subjects of unavailing lamentation to the wicked. A recollection of the opportunities which they have lost, of receiving good instructions, and of communicating them to

ⁱⁱ Job xxxiv. 29.

^k Ezek. xvi. 6.

^l ib. xxxiii. 11.

others ; the stings of conscience upon the remembrance of a slighted Saviour ; a despised Gospel, sermons, and means, undervalued ; will deeply aggravate their sorrow. And, ah ! how many, who have prostituted their time to the service of the Devil, will awake up, in the eternal world, confounded, on finding themselves deeply accountable for the misuse of those talents which God entrusted to their care !

8. Nor will it be any diminution, but a great increase of their torment, to reflect how many have been confirmed in vice by their evil example. To hear a once affectionate child upbraid his parents, as the authors of his sufferings ; to behold a servant reproaching his master, who, through a neglect of pious instructions, and the corrupting influence of an ungodly life, has been accessory to his ruin ;—indeed for a Minister, who has been entrusted with the care of souls, to hear, at the day of judgment, but one lost sheep of his flock saying, “ I was deceived and misled by his doctrine and example, and hence I am come into this place of torment ; ” will cause reflections that will be utterly insupportable. For, surely, the guilt of having destroyed their own souls will be heavy enough, without any accumulation of curses and execrations from those whom they have seduced into sin.

When we consider, then, that our example, whether it be good or bad, will be imitated by those around us, let every one of us endeavour to live righteously ; that, at the day of accounts, we may be able to rejoice in having done what we could—not to destroy, but to bless our fellow-creatures.

9. The society which hell affords to its inhabitants *will not* alleviate, but augment, their sufferings.

There they will see the Devil, the prince of darkness, by whose subtle devices they were induced to cast off the fear of God, and to rebel against his government: and a discovery of the frauds which he has practised, and the stratagems which he has employed, to entice them to the commission of iniquity, will excite a lasting enmity to him, to whose hateful dominion they must for ever submit. There they will find themselves surrounded with "fallen angels, who kept not their first estate; but have been reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day^m." Having joined with Satan in an impious revolt from God, they will now share in his punishment; and with him will be equally hated by those unhappy deluded souls who have hearkened to their lying suggestions.

Nor will it be any abatement of their own anguish to find themselves associated with millions in the same place of torment. Their companions in vice, whose society and friendship they once courted, will now have no power to moderate their sorrow, or to mitigate those pangs of grief, of which they will so largely partake. Now, being partners in suffering, as they once were in guilt, they will be incapable of giving the least assistance to each other. The request of a single drop of water, to cool their parched tongues, will be made in vainⁿ.

The mutual reproaches, curses, and imprecations, with which they will load one another, will be a fresh source of bitter reflection. Here, then, how vehemently they accuse and recriminate each other! One thus accosts his fellow sinner: "Oh that I had not hearkened to you, then I should not have come into this place of unutterable torment!"—whilst he

^m Jude 6.

ⁿ Luke xvi. 23—27.

will retort the accusation, by saying, "I was emboldened in sin by the countenance which you gave to my evil practices. You were not forced, but of your own choice followed my example." And then, instead of sympathizing with each other, they will reciprocally execrate the day of their acquaintance.

Seeing these things are so, how wise is the counsel of Solomon: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not^e." Let each one give himself the solemn charge, and say, "O my soul! come not thou into their secret: unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united^f!"

10. The punishment of the wicked, we are expressly informed, will be eternal in its duration; and this circumstance will add a peculiar poignancy to the misery of condemned souls. The Romish notion of a purgatory, in which a sinner is so purified by temporary suffering as to become fit for mansions of glory, is a fiction, as contrary to reason as it is to Scripture. It is not a necessary tendency of punishment to subdue the enmity of the human soul against God, or to correct its corrupt propensities: on the contrary, it sometimes rather confirms them^{pp}.

The unrighteous, after judgment, will be unchangeably fixed in hell, there to remain throughout the unending ages of eternity. They will be thrust into those horrid caverns of darkness, where not one ray of light can enter, to cheer their gloomy abode; nor one ray of hope, to encourage an expectation of future mercy. During their life-time, God might have been successfully entreated by them; but now he will be inexorably severe, saying, "Behold, ye despisers of my grace, and wonder, and perish^q!" He will remind them of his compassionate endeavours to save their

^eProv. i. 10. ^fGen. xlix. 6. ^{pp}Rev. xvi. 9—12. ^qActs xiii. 41.

souls ; and the sin of having refused to obey his voice will be an occasion of incessant grief : “ Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me^r. ”

From those passages of Scripture which speak of the eternity of hell-torments, we shall select a few. Our Lord repeatedly mentions the fire of hell, into which the impenitent will be cast, as a punishment that admits of no change or intermission : “ Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched^s. ” The upbraidings of a guilty conscience, smarting under the anguish of God’s wrath, is compared to a worm always gnawing its prey, but never devouring it. Can any language more strikingly convey to us an idea both of the eternal duration and the intense degree of the misery of the damned !

The sentence which Christ passes upon the wicked corroborates the awful truth, “ that they will be tormented day and night for ever. ” “ And then shall he say unto them on the left-hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels^t. ” “ And these shall go away into everlasting punishment^u. ”

St. Paul thus describes the majesty of Christ’s second advent, and the eternal indignation with which he will visit the offences of his adversaries :— “ When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking

^r Prov. i. 24—30.

^s Mat. xxv. 41.

^t Mark ix. 44.

^u ib. 46.

vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power¹."

Thus the unholy, profane, and thoughtless sinner will be rendered capable, at the Resurrection, of enduring those sufferings which are to have no abatement or end²².

When, therefore, they shall experience the loss of God's favour and the joys of heaven ; when they shall commence an endless state of inconceivable sorrow ; when Satan shall deride their unavailing tears, and their lost associates reproach their crimes ; and, finally, when the door of heaven shall be shut, and the impassable gulph preclude all access to God ; oh, how unutterably wretched will impenitent souls then be !

The mind is appalled at the contemplation of the misery of the damned in hell ! The ear recoils at the sound of those bitter shrieks and howling lamentations which issue from the infernal caverns ! The eye refuses to witness that deep and heartfelt distress which is painted in the countenances of those unhappy souls, on whom the just indignation of God is incessantly poured out !—A celebrated poet has described it in terms incomparably awful³.

11. As sin is the procuring cause of such torments, in what light should we regard it ? Is it to be thought lightly of, and treated, as it generally is, with complete indifference, as if it had no power to do us harm ? Like those whom Solomon stigmatizes with the epithet of "fools," do you fearlessly "make a mock of sin⁴?" What is this, but to cherish that

²² 2 Thess. i. 7—10.

²² Mark ix. 49.

³ Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book I. lines 44—75.

⁴ Prov. xiv. 9.

most deadly poison in your breasts, which has already proved destructive to countless thousands of your fellow-creatures? What is this, but wantonly to sport with the destroyer, whose arm is lifted up to strike the fatal blow?

Go, and ask those hapless beings, who inhabit the regions of despair, the cause of their inexpressible sorrow. With one accord, they proclaim, that the indulgence of sinful desires has placed them at such an awful distance from God, and excited his fury against them.

Hear, then, ye "careless ones," who are at ease in your sins, how condemned spirits call to you with a loud voice from the depths of hell, and solemnly warn you to forsake your evil courses immediately, lest "iniquity should prove your ruin!" And will you disregard their salutary admonitions? Will not their torments dissuade you from vice? Can you deliberately wish to partake of their sorrows? Surely not! for the very thought of it is sufficient to startle you.

12. Be wise then, and shun the paths of folly. Detest sin, in whatever shape it may present itself to your imagination; for there is a curse, and not a blessing in it. Be ready, at the invitation of your Saviour, to sacrifice, without delay, those darling lusts and pleasures, which, though they may now be as dear to you as the most valuable members of your bodies, will, if retained, occasion your inevitable destruction. "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two

eyes to be cast into hell-fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched²."

Indeed, there is no possibility of escaping this doom, but by unfeigned contrition for past iniquities, a lively faith in Christ, and a real amendment of life. This is the method prescribed by God himself, for the recovery of his lost favour. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart, and a new spirit: for why will ye die¹?"

A habit of righteousness, produced by faith in Christ, will admit you to that perfect state of felicity, which excludes suffering and torments, and secures joy and immortality, as your unfailing portion.

¹ Mat. xviii. 8, 9. Mark ix. 43—48. ² Ezek. xviii. 31.

LECTURE XXXV.

ON GLORIFICATION, OR THE HAPPINESS OF SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

Psalm xvi. 11. *In Thy presence is fulness of joy: at thy right-hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

PIOUS men, being called to the service of God by his Spirit, sanctified by his grace, improved by a course of religious discipline; and being, by such means, fitted for the enjoyments of a superior state; will, agreeably to the Divine promise, be transported, after death, to heaven, to enjoy its bliss for ever. At the consummation of all things, Christ will say to the whole body of the Faithful, collectively, and to each one of them separately, "Come ye blessed (children) of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world¹!"

¹ Mat. xxv. 34.

But how immensely great, and how exquisitely glorious, that happiness is which awaits them, no tongue can fully express, or imagination depict ! Christians ! all we can do, is, to present you with a rough unfinished draught of celestial glory, which you will be able to fill up and complete in heaven : for, in order to form just conceptions on such a subject, we ought to possess an exact knowledge of it, which they only can acquire whose happy lot it will be to inherit heaven for ever and ever.

Let us, however, admire the condescending goodness of the Lord, who has revealed enough, concerning the bliss of that state, to stimulate every reasonable being to use the most unremitting efforts to obtain it. And it is certain, that in proportion as we are rightly influenced by the representations given of it in the Scriptures, we shall be diligent in seeking an acquaintance with it, accounting the gain and enjoyment of heaven the highest felicity to which a finite being can arrive, and the deprivation of it the greatest and most intolerable punishment and loss we can suffer : “ For, what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? ”

In discussing this subject, I shall abstain from speculation, and offer only those remarks upon it which Revelation warrants.

1. We are authorised to affirm, that the happiness of the heavenly world is altogether spiritual. The bliss of heaven does not consist in the gross sensual enjoyments promised by Mahomet to his deluded votaries ; nor of the ideal pleasures of the fabled Elysium of the Poets ; which are more suited to the taste of a vicious carnal mind, than to give satisfac-

^b Mark viii. 36, 37.

tion to souls panting after a glorious immortality. In the realms of light and peace and holiness above, there will be nothing to feast a lascivious eye, to gratify corrupt passions, or to minister any delight to a wicked heart. "The kingdom of God," St. Paul assures us, "is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost^c." There will be, however, in those blessed abodes, constant sources of gratification for the righteous; even pure, holy, intellectual pleasures, flowing from the favour and knowledge of God, whose presence diffuses complete happiness and the fulness of joy amongst all the countless multitudes of heaven. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away^d."

2. The bliss of the eternal world is perfect, both in its nature and degree. The perfection of heavenly glory arises from the absence of evil, and the presence of the most exalted and satisfying good: "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest^e." None of those ills and sorrows which disorder this chequered scene, and embitter our existence in this vale of tears, can follow us to the regions of blessedness. Sin, which has been the fruitful cause of all the sufferings to which man is heir, can have no entrance there; otherwise it would mar the felicity of heaven, and convert its joys into mourning and woe. But God has determined that neither the cause nor the effects of moral evil shall have any existence in the glorified state; and, consequently, that there his favoured people shall be *placed* beyond the reach of grief, pain, disease, vexation, or any of those troubles which molest or disturb

^c Rom. xiv. 17.

^d Isa. xxxv. 10.

^e Job iii. 17.

them whilst they sojourn here. "God hath prepared for them a city," in which he has decreed, "there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face^f."

The joys of heaven, then, will require nothing to render them more complete; so that they will be capable of imparting the most exquisite delight, and of gratifying the most enlarged wishes of a regenerate soul; which, being there in its proper element, and absorbed in the boundless enjoyment of God, will be filled with wonder, love, and gratitude, whilst it beholds the effulgence of his glory, and receives that beatific smile with which he will favour his obedient Children, who will then enjoy a display of affection infinitely surpassing, both in kind and degree, the warmest tokens of regard shewn by an earthly parent to his beloved offspring.

The completeness of that glory and honour and immortality and eternal life, which is provided for the saints, is thus described in the language of inspiration,—language in which there is a grandeur of thought, and extent of meaning, which no human conception can reach. "Oh, how great is Thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee^g!" "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him^h." "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; and at Thy right-hand there are pleasures for evermoreⁱ." From hence we learn, that good unmixed with evil, and felicity unalloyed, and unembittered with the miseries incident to the present imperfect state, will be the final portion of the righteous.

^f Rev. xii. 3, 4. ^g Ps. xxxi. 19. ^h 1 Cor. ii. 9. ⁱ Ps. xvi. 11.

Different degrees of happiness will, no doubt, be awarded to the servants of the Lord, in his holy kingdom. Even in the school of Christ here below, his scholars and pupils differ widely in their attainments. Some make a rapid and extensive progress in Divine knowledge; and hence, by reason of more frequently exercising their spiritual senses and faculties, they are better able than others to discern betwixt good and evil, and to receive the most sublime truths of the Gospel, which more peculiarly interest those Christians who have made a considerable proficiency in Divine things¹¹. Others, being of duller capacity, advance but slowly in the knowledge of Christ; using "the milk of the word" only, they rarely go beyond "the first principles of the oracles of God¹²;" and, hence, the noble gratification arising from an acquaintance with the heights and depths, and lengths and breadths, of the more exalted doctrines of the Cross is exclusively enjoyed by the better-instructed Christian.

Is it contrary, then, either to Scripture, or analogy, or reason, to suppose that a similar difference will be made in the quantity of happiness which the attainments, graces, and usefulness of the most eminent servants of God qualify them to receive above others? Surely not; for the difference which is apparent in the power and splendor and utility of natural objects, and in the rank and capacities of spiritual intelligences, furnishes no mean argument for the belief, that "as one star differeth from another star in glory," and that as there are several orders of angelic beings in the hierarchy of heaven who are raised above each other by increased wisdom and *might*, so, also, that a larger measure of glory may

¹¹ Heb. v. 14.

¹² *ib.* ver. 12.

be reserved in the Church triumphant for those whose faith, and hope, and knowledge, and zeal, and obedience, and labours, and self-denial, and sacrifices in the cause of Christ have been most conspicuous and beneficial. Yet, whilst the largest vessel will be filled up to the brim, there will be no deficiency in the smallest; but each redeemed soul, receiving the degree of glory for which it is fitted, will bask with ceaseless and ineffable delight in the sunshine of the Divine favour.

3. The happiness of the people of God in heaven will be satisfying. The properties of earthly pleasures are, vanity, uncertainty, and insufficiency. It is not, therefore, in their power to afford rational or lasting enjoyment: on the contrary, it is found that they cloy and satiate upon a repetition, because there is nothing in them suited to the wants of the soul; which longs after immortality, as the consummation of its hopes and wishes. With propriety then, did Solomon, as the result of a full experiment of their emptiness, and insufficiency to make him happy, write on them this inscription, "Behold, all is vanity, and vexation of spirit!"

But celestial joys are, in their very nature, adapted to give the utmost satisfaction to the mind. They have no tendency to produce weariness; but, after fresh and repeated trials, they minister new and lively pleasure; and whilst the soul is ravished in the pursuit of them with indescribable delight, they ennoble, and raise it up to its proper elevation. In the enjoyment of them, there is the completest satisfaction; for the minds of the redeemed being possessed, as they will be hereafter, of as much happiness as they will be capable of containing, there will be no aching

¹ Eccles. i. 14.

void in them to fill up, nor any object unattained, to disturb their blissful repose.

4. What renders the glorification of the righteous still more important, is the consideration, that it will be eternal in its duration. Temporal possessions are held by a very precarious tenure: besides that, they are evanescent, and hourly tending to decay: the thought that we may be suddenly dispossessed of them, by a thousand unforeseen events which we are unable to controul, shews us the folly of substituting them for that permanent good which alone can make us everlastingly happy.

Xerxes, the Persian monarch, indulged in transports of joy and admiration at the sight of his immense army, and the splendour of their military accoutrements: but his joy was soon turned into mourning, when he reflected, that, in the space of an hundred years, not one of that countless host would survive the stroke of death.

The worldling, whose happiness is derived from terrestrial objects, may give vent to a similar lamentation, when he calls to mind that those pleasures, which he covets, will soon "vanish away, like as a dream when one awaketh^m."

The Christian, however, has nothing to fear on this account. The object on which his heart is set, is of a most enduring nature. "The inheritance," which he is soon to possess, "is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." The blessings which he expects to realize, are as secure and immoveable as the pillars of heaven, which cannot be shaken. Unalterably fixed as he will be hereafter, in a happy state, no accident, nor any violence, will be able to deprive him of it; for the redemption of Christ, which pro-

^m Psalm lxxiii. 20.

vides for the salvation of his people, as well as the inviolable covenant of God, secure a perpetuity of bliss to the saints^{um}. How cheering to such should be the thought, that after millions of years have been spent in the fruition of heaven, their happiness will be no nearer to an end than it was before they partook of it; and that it will admit of no diminution or cessation, throughout a never-ending eternity. So that the spirituality, the perfection, the satisfying qualities, and the permanence of heavenly glory, impress on it a character of supreme blessedness, which constitute it the chief good of man.

O immortal souls! how transcendently delightful must that state be which offers such advantages! If the bare contemplation of it is capable of filling you with joys too big for utteranceⁿ, what ecstatic, what infinite pleasure will its actual possession afford! Be it your strenuous endeavour to seek it continually, that "when mortality is swallowed up of life," you may inherit that happiness as your eternal portion.

5. The sources from whence all this blessedness emanates evince its invaluable and exalted nature. Scripture records it as the enviable privilege of the godly, that they shall be permitted to enjoy the beatific vision of the Sacred Three, whose glorious presence fills all heaven with endless joy. Thus our Lord Jesus Christ promises that regenerate persons shall see the kingdom of God^{un}; and that "the pure in heart shall see God" himself, the fountain of light and goodness°. Now, "to see God," is a phrase which signifies to enjoy him for ever; otherwise, to behold him for a short time, and then to be deprived of the felicity of being eternally with him, would be a curse, rather than a blessing.

^{um} Isa. li. 6. ⁿ 1 Pet. i. 8. ^{un} John iii. 3. ° Mat. v. 8.

Yes, it is a consolatory truth, that good men will both see God, and enjoy his favour for ever. In heaven, they will be privileged with constant access to their Almighty Father and Friend, whose smile of complacency will render them perpetually happy before him. There, they will behold Jesus Christ, who voluntarily submitted to an ignominious and painful death, in order to ransom their souls from everlasting destruction. And when they discover those immeasurable heights of bliss to which they are raised by his unequalled sufferings, their hearts will expand with a love and gratitude to their Saviour which language cannot adequately express. Without a dissentient voice, the immense congregation of the redeemed will exclaim, "Unto Him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever! Amen^q." Indeed, without a sight of God and his Christ, to whose transcendent grace and unexampled kindness Christians are indebted for the blessedness which they will then enjoy, even heaven, with all its grandeur, would be, comparatively, cheerless, and void of gratification^{pp}.

And how superior will their enjoyments be in the glorified state! It is true, that, whilst in the Church militant on earth, God often manifests tokens of loving-kindness to his people, and grants them a foretaste of those heavenly joys which are laid up in reversion for them; but in the Church triumphant their happiness will be completed. The shadow will then be withdrawn, to make room for the substance. Whilst they continue here below, they only, as it were, sip at the stream; but above, they shall drink

^q Rev. i. 5, 6.

^{pp} ib. xxii. 5.

copious draughts of bliss from the fountain of eternal joy. The promises, which have been a ground of support to their souls on earth, will be fully accomplished in heaven, where all their hopes shall be completely realized. And then they will be no longer sojourners and pilgrims in a strange land, but dwell for ever and ever in their Father's house, in which are many mansions⁹.

Moses was indeed greatly honoured, in being permitted to hold converse with God, and to see him, though but in part, whilst hid in the cleft of a rock¹⁰. And this was all that he, or any mortal, could behold of Uncreated Deity; the refulgence of whose glory is so dazzling, that no human being can contemplate it and live¹.

But how surpassing great will be the felicity of the saints, when they shall be allowed to gaze on all the splendour and perfections of the Majesty of Heaven! Even the borrowed radiance of an angel would terrify us here¹¹; but in the bright world above, believers will be prepared, by the spiritual change which will pass on their souls and bodies, to contemplate the Divine Glory, in its highest display, with unveiled faces, and without an intervening cloud. And the imposing sight, so far from exciting consternation, will transport their souls with ineffable joy, and transform them "into the same image, from glory to glory¹²."

6. The happiness of heaven will be greatly augmented by a large accession of knowledge. The highest attainments made by the disciples of Jesus, in this imperfect state, will not bear the most distant comparison with those lofty heights of wisdom

⁹ John xiv. 1—4.

¹⁰ Exod. xxxiii. 22.

¹¹ 1b. v. 20.

¹² Rev. i. 17. xix. 10.

¹³ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

which they will acquire in the world of glory above. A near access and approach to the Lord will qualify their glorified spirits to comprehend more clearly his nature and eternal godhead, his boundless wisdom and power and goodness, his unsullied justice and righteousness, and his unimpeachable veracity and faithfulness. The native lustre of the Divine perfections will be constantly unfolding itself to their capacious minds, which will be able to make every improvement that can increase their felicity.

Their knowledge of heavenly truths will not be gained by the same tardy process of learning by which it is usually acquired here, but by immediate intuition; and it will be absolutely perfect in its nature and degree. "Now we see through a glass (or mirror) darkly; but then face to face: now we know in part; but then shall we know even as also we are known. And when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Though, at the same time, there will, it is most probable, be ample scope in heaven for the exercise of our intellectual powers, in contemplating the wisdom of God, which will furnish matter for continual improvement, throughout the countless ages of eternal duration.

Besides a knowledge of the exalted perfections of God, the saints will more fully understand the nature of that misery from which they have been rescued by the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. In heaven, they will distinctly see the guilt and the folly of sin, and acknowledge the justice of God in condemning the wicked to everlasting punishment: and the display of his righteous judgments will excite their awe and admiration. There, too, all those

difficulties in the moral government of God, and all those trying dispensations of his providence which have staggered our faith and perplexed our hearts, will be solved and cleared up ; and the equity, kindness, and attention, with which it will then appear that Jehovah has acted toward us and all mankind, will raise in us admiring thoughts of his unbounded goodness.

There they will be able to appreciate the unparalleled love of a gracious Saviour, who shed his blood to reconcile them to an offended God, to make them his beloved children, and to purchase for them a title to the enjoyment of endless glory. A survey of bliss so great, of mercy and compassion so unexampled and undeserved, will lay a foundation of incessant joy, and gratitude, and praise.

7. The perfection of holiness which Christians will possess in heaven will be another source of inexpressible pleasure. There they will be completely holy, in thought, desire, and affection ; and the sanctity of their state will insure perpetual joy. Sin can have no more dominion over them, because it will be entirely excluded from those pure regions "wherein dwelleth righteousness." No sinful passions, no unhallowed propensities and lusts, will agitate their bosoms ; no perversity of mind disturb their repose ; since they will feel such a perfect acquiescence in the good pleasure of God, as will preclude the least opposition to His holy will.

They will not be any longer within the reach of temptation, nor be liable to fall away from their integrity. Being freed from the influence of sensual appetites ; those enticing baits, by which they were once too easily taken, will have no power to seduce them any more. Vested with a "spiritual

body"" adapted to that glorious condition, their souls will experience no hinderance in the sublime and holy employments of the celestial world.

Our service and worship will also be perfect, both in end and aim. Admiration of the wisdom, justice, and compassion of God will prompt us to love and serve him, not only for what he has done, but for what he is in himself—the sum and substance of all excellence. There will be nothing in heaven to quench our zeal, or abate the highest fervour of devotion. No drowsiness will oppress our souls; no dislike to or weariness in spiritual exercises will afflict our minds. Nor shall we have any cause to complain of languid endeavours after holiness; for all our intellectual powers will be actively employed in praising and adoring God, without any fatigue or intermission. "They shall serve him day and night, in his holy temple".

8. The society to which believers will be indissolubly united, will afford another ground of real pleasure. If we think it no small gratification to enjoy communion with good and wise men on earth, what exquisite pleasure will accrue to us, in the Church above, from associating with "angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven!" who will stimulate us, by their example, to the practice of every thing which God approves.

And, with what heartfelt delight shall we recognise those pious and beloved friends "with whom we took sweet counsel, and walked together" in the ways of God here below! That delightful and endeared union begun on earth, which has been interrupted by death, will be revived again, and ce-

" 1 Cor. xv. 44.

" Rev. vii. 15.

mented in bonds of everlasting love, too strong to be broken any more.

Yes, O transporting thought! such a general harmony, both in sentiment and feeling, will pervade the immense regions of heaven, as will perpetuate a reciprocal affection among “the saints and the household of God.”

And, oh, how blissful will it be, to see ourselves surrounded by those, who, though once sunk in sin and ignorance, have been made wise and holy, “meet to be partakers with ourselves of the inheritance of the saints in light;” men of every climate and complexion—the European, Asiatic, African, and American; constituting “a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, standing before the throne of God, clothed with white robes, and palms of victory in their hands^u!” How joyful will it be, to unite with the whole ransomed Church in swelling the chorus of praise, and in making the vault of heaven ring with acclamations of thanksgiving; “saying, Alleluia! salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God^x!”

Thus, we learn that heaven affords a perfection, a perpetuity of bliss indescribable; comprehending every excellence which can minister solid satisfaction to the mind. The possession of it will raise the redeemed, in some respects, to a level with angels and archangels^y; whilst the sweet repose, the absolute freedom from pain, disease, danger, and death, and the enjoyment of the most substantial pleasures, will render heaven all that the most enlarged souls can desire.

9. How natural is it for every thinking person to

^u Rev. vii. 9.

^x ib. xix. 1.

^y Luke xx. 35, 36.

put the solemn inquiry to himself; 'When the immense population of heaven is made up, shall I appear amongst the shining ranks of "just men made perfect," and participate their glory; or, oh, dread alternative! shall I be excluded from the blest society of God and angels, to have my portion with the infernal host, in regions of dark and doleful despair?'

This examination should be conducted with the utmost sincerity; because it refers to a subject, the most big with importance of any that can occupy the mind of man. To use the most unremitting exertions to secure heaven, and avoid hell, is the highest wisdom and prudence which we can exercise: for the happiness we have been feebly depicting, is not a visionary flight of enthusiasm; nor is the heaven which we exhort you to seek, a mere Utopia—a fancied region of imaginary delights: it is a real felicity, of which good men have even the prelibation here, and of which they will have the eternal possession hereafter. Neither is hell a childish terror, invented to frighten the world: it is a reality, of which the consciences of the wicked have occasional anticipations here; and which, with all its unutterable torments, they must endure for ever hereafter².

For one of these widely-different states, Reader, you are a candidate; and towards it you are marching, with all the rapidity with which time can impel you forward. Soon, then, you will be unchangeably fixed, in happiness unspeakable, or in everlasting woe. By a compliance with the will of God, you may "gain the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus;"—and, it is equally possible, by a criminal negligence, to lose the present peace and

² Mat. xxv. 41.

the future glory which the Gospel affords—a loss that will be irreparably great! a disaster that will be replete with the most awful consequences!

10. With such prospects before you, and standing on the verge of the eternal world, into which you may be ushered in a moment, are you unconcerned about the result; heedless, whether you sink into hell, or ascend up to heaven? Do you still obstinately reject the Gospel of Christ, refuse to abandon your sins, and to cultivate holiness of heart and life, without which it is impossible to see God? Are you so absorbed in the pleasures or business of a vain world, so allured by its deceitful shadowy objects, as to neglect “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” and the joys of his kingdom? Pause a moment! and be convinced, that you have heretofore acted with egregious folly, in being so willing to part with an invaluable inheritance, to acquire—what? Why, an empty bubble, an unsubstantial “vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

It is not too late to discover your errors, and pursue a wiser course. Henceforth, then, let the attainment of spiritual happiness be the summit of your ambition, the grand scope and ultimate end of all your actions; so will you be privileged, in common with the saints, to dwell for ever with the Lord.

11. Are you, Reader, conscious of your unworthiness? Are you ready to ask, ‘Can such bliss be reserved for me? May such a sinful creature, as I am, indulge a well-grounded expectation of dwelling with God, in the mansions of light and peace and joy? Will it be my lot to join with angels in ascribing honour and salvation to God?’ Yes, contrite soul, devoted believer! the covenant promise of

Jehovah assures you, that all who love God, and serve him in righteousness, shall live with him, in the eternal fruition of heaven. Be of good cheer: the desires of your heart will soon be gratified. Soon the days of your mourning shall be ended, and the auspicious morning of the Resurrection commence. Then the Divine word will be fully verified:—"Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and thy God thy glory²²."

²² Isa. lx. 19, 20.

END OF VOLUME I.

CORRIGENDA, VOL. I.

- P. 51. l. 7. read *incontestable*.
52. l. 24. read *with their*.
56. l. 10. read *Scripture*.
64. l. 27. read *much more*.
69. l. 8. read *seems*.
97. l. 19. read *whence*.
106. l. 26. read *captive by him*.
ib. l. 30. read *his deadly foe*.
137. l. 3. read *and reconciliation*.
185. l. 4. read *unrighteousness*.
206. l. 22. read *effecting*.
255. l. 24. read *productive of*.
267. l. 26. read *unrighteousness*.
322. l. 30. read *and*, for *his*.
358. l. 5. read *shall*, for *will*.
392. l. 35. read *therefore*.

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